

THE USE AND EXEGESIS OF JOHN VI
IN THE EARLY CHURCH

BY

JAMES WEIR DAVIDSON

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Name of Candidate JAMES WEIR DAVIDSON

Address

Degree Doctor of Philosophy Date November, 1972

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Each author is studied in turn with some attention being paid to his general understanding of Scripture and exegesis whenever his ideas on that subject have been more or less fully expressed.

The study begins with an examination of second century authors, Ignatius, Justin and Irenaeus, whose references to the chapter are of an allusive nature only. Then some examples of the use made of it by Gnostic writers is given. These early writers do not provide much that is useful in determining the Church's interpretation of the passage.

Its interpretation is followed through the work of the Alexandrian writers, Clement and Origen, with whom a real exegesis of the passage begins. Quotations of portions of the chapter in the Latin authors of the third century, Tertullian, Cyprian and Novatian, is examined.

The use of verses of the chapter during the fourth century in both catechetical works and doctrinal controversy is studied. This part of the thesis covers the writings of Hilary and Ambrose, Cyril of Jerusalem and Ephrem the Syrian.

The more detailed exegesis of the great preachers and commentators of the fourth and fifth centuries, Chrysostom, Theodore, Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria, is studied.

A final section attempts by way of comparison and contrast to correlate the ideas that have emerged in the course of the study. Some instances of the recurrence of the ideas of earlier writers in the work of later ones is pointed out. Verses which were of especial interest to the fathers receive some discussion.

Although no attempt is made to deal in detail with the work of modern commentators on John, some reference to their writings is made for the purpose of showing that some insights of the fathers are still considered valid in the present century. The suggestion is made that the fathers' custom of seeing a passage as intended to convey meanings on more than one level of thought may still be useful in an understanding of such a passage as the one studied.

TO

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without whose encouragement and support
this thesis would not have been completed

PREFACE

In submitting this thesis to the University of Edinburgh I wish to record my thanks to the Presbyterian College, Montreal, for the scholarship which enabled me to enter upon the research involved in writing it. I acknowledge also the kindness and helpfulness of the Faculty, the Librarian and the staff of New College during the period of my study. I especially wish to thank my supervisors, the Reverend Professor Hugh Anderson and Mr. D.F. Wright, for their guidance, encouragement and criticism during the course of my research and writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page No.</u>
Preface	iii.
Table of Contents	iv.
Abbreviations	vi.
Summary	viii.
Introduction	1.
I. Second Century Writers:	
Ignatius	12.
Justin Martyr	21.
Irenaeus	25.
II. Gnosticism	29.
The Naassenes	33.
The Apocryphal Letter of James	38.
The Gospel of Philip	42.
The Acts of Thomas	47.
III. Early Alexandrian Writers:	
Clement	49.
Origen	59.
IV. Early Latin Writers:	
Tertullian	77.
Cyprian	90.
Novatian	101.
V. Syrian Writers:	
Tatian	108.
Ephrem	109.
VI. Fourth Century Eastern Authors:	
Athanasius	117.
Cyril of Jerusalem	127.
The Cappadocian Fathers:	
Basil the Great	135.
Gregory Nazianzus	141.
Gregory of Nyssa	143.
Chrysostom	148.
VII. Fourth Century Western Authors:	
Hilary of Poitiers	162.
Ambrose of Milan	175.

	<u>Page No.</u>
VIII. Fifth Century Commentators:	
Augustine of Hippo	188.
Theodore of Mopsuestia	223.
Cyril of Alexandria	239.
IX. Appraisal	270.
X. Concluding Remarks	307.
Bibliography	310.

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>ANCL</u>	<u>Ante-Nicene Christian Library</u> , (edd. A. Roberts & J. Donaldson), Edinburgh, 1864ff
<u>BS</u>	<u>Bibliotheca Sacra</u>
<u>CCSL</u>	<u>Corpus Christianorum, series Latina</u> , Turnhout and Paris, 1953ff
<u>CH</u>	<u>Church History</u>
<u>CQR</u>	<u>Church Quarterly Review</u>
<u>CSEL</u>	<u>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</u> , Vienna, 1866ff
<u>DR</u>	<u>Downside Review</u>
<u>DTC</u>	<u>Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique</u> , (edd. A. Vacant, E. Mangenot, E. Amann), Paris, 1903ff
<u>EB</u>	<u>Encyclopedia Britannica</u> , 1964 edition
<u>EQ</u>	<u>Evangelical Quarterly</u>
<u>ET</u>	English Translation
<u>EVT</u>	<u>Evangelische Theologie</u>
<u>Exp</u>	<u>The Expositor</u>
<u>ExpT</u>	<u>Expository Times</u>
<u>F.</u>	<u>Novatian's Treatise on the Trinity</u> , (ed. W.Y. Fausset), Cambridge, 1909
<u>GCS</u>	<u>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</u> , Leipzig, 1897ff
<u>HJ</u>	<u>Heythrop Journal</u>
<u>HTR</u>	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u>
<u>ICC John</u>	<u>A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John Vol. I</u> , by J.H. Bernard, Edinburgh, 1923
<u>Int.B</u>	<u>Interpreter's Bible</u> , New York, 1951ff
<u>JBL</u>	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
<u>JBR</u>	<u>Journal of Bible and Religion</u>

- JTS Journal of Theological Studies
- LCC The Library of Christian Classics, (edd. J. Baillie, J.T. McNeill, H.P. Van Dusen), London, 1953ff
- LF A Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church, anterior to the Division of the East and West, Oxford & London, 1833ff
- LXX Septuagint
- NPNF A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, (edd. P. Schaff & H. Wace), Oxford, New York, Grand Rapids, 1886ff
- NT Novum Testamentum
- NTS New Testament Studies
- P. Sancti Patris Nostri Cyrilli Archiepiscopi Alexandrini in D. Joannis Evangelium, edidit P.E. Pusey, Oxford, 1872
- PG Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca, (ed. J.P. Migne)
- PL Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina, (ed. J.P. Migne)
- Reca Recherches Augustiniennes
- SC Sources Chrétiennes, (edd. H. de Lubac & J. Daniélou), Paris, 1941ff
- TU Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
- Vosté Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in Evangelium Johannis Apostoli interpretatus est J.-M. Vosté, O.P., Paris, 1940
- VC Vigiliae Christianae
- WC Woodbrooke Studies

SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain how the sixth chapter of the Fourth Gospel was understood and used in the earliest period of the Church's exegesis. It takes the form of an historical survey of the thought of the fathers on that passage up to the time of Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria.

Each author is studied in turn with some attention being paid to his general understanding of Scripture and exegesis whenever his ideas on that subject have been more or less fully expressed.

The study begins with an examination of second century authors, Ignatius, Justin and Irenaeus, whose references to the chapter are of an allusive nature only. Then some examples of the use made of it by Gnostic writers is given. These early writers do not provide much that is useful in determining the Church's interpretation of the passage.

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A final section attempts by way of comparison and contrast to correlate the ideas that have emerged in the course of the study. Some instances of the recurrence of the ideas of earlier writers in the work of later ones is pointed out. Verses which were of especial interest to the fathers receive some discussion.

Although no attempt is made to deal in detail with the work of modern commentators on John, some reference to their writings is made for the purpose of showing that some insights of the fathers are still considered valid in the present century. The suggestion is made that the fathers' custom of seeing a passage as intended to convey meanings on more than one level of thought may still be useful in an understanding of such a passage as the one studied.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to ascertain how the sixth chapter of the Fourth Gospel was understood and used in the teaching of the early Church. The attempt will not be made to go beyond the fathers of the Church to seek to determine the precise intention of the evangelist himself. The quantity of modern writing on the question of John's meaning in this chapter is very extensive. In his cumulative bibliography of literature on the Fourth Gospel for the years 1920 - 1965 Malatesta includes sixty-seven items on the sixth chapter alone and cross references to twenty-five other items in addition to listing one hundred and seventy-one commentaries on the whole Gospel.¹ Commentators have by no means reached agreement on the interpretation of the passage, especially so with regard to the discourse section. The following sampling of comment indicates the widely differing views held, particularly with respect to its eucharistic connotations.

There are those, like R.H. Lightfoot, who say simply that "a reference to the eucharistic rite of the Church is inescapable."² Others make the emphasis more definite. Cullmann says: "Ici l'évangéliste fait tracer à Jésus lui-même la ligne qui va du miracle matériel de la distribution des pains au miracle opéré dans le sacrement."³ Jeremias goes further still in saying that the discourse

1. E. Malatesta, St. John's Gospel 1920 - 1965 Analecta Biblica 32 (Rome, 1967), pp. 55-63, 93-96.

2. R.H. Lightfoot, St. John's Gospel (Oxford, 1956), p. 162.

3. O. Cullmann, Les Sacrements dans l'Évangile Johannique (Paris, 1951), p. 63.

is "perhaps even an actual eucharistic homily."⁴

J. Bligh regards the whole chapter as "intended by the Evangelist to be an instruction on the Eucharist."⁵ He believes the passage to have been made up by combining several discourses of Jesus, verses 51b-58 probably having been spoken at the Last Supper. Raymond Brown also sees the discourse as composed in this way with the eucharistic theme running through the whole chapter. Although he sees the statements about the bread of life as referring to doctrine to be believed, he believes verses 51-58 to be "solely sacramental."⁶ Bultmann sees a sharp contrast between verses 51b-58 and the rest of the discourse. These verses he regards as referring to the eucharist in the sense of a *φάρμακον ἀθανασίας* and thus concludes that they have been added by an ecclesiastical redactor.⁷

Markus Barth, on the other hand, writes that the eating and drinking of Jesus' flesh and blood should be understood in the same metaphoric way as entering through the door (Jn x.9) or abiding in the vine (Jn xv.4f) and not in the same way as the synoptic accounts of the Last Supper.⁸ Strathmann, though admitting that the recollection of

4. J. Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus ET N. Perrin (London, 1966), p. 107.

5. J. Bligh, "Jesus in Galilee" The Heythrop Journal 5, 1964, 21.

6. R.E. Brown, New Testament Essays (London, 1965), pp. 79, 82, 86.

7. R. Bultmann, The Gospel of John, A Commentary ET G.R. Beasley-Murray, R.W.N. Hoare, J.K. Riches (Oxford, 1971), pp. 213f.

8. M. Barth, Der Augenzeuge (Zürich, 1946), p. 266.

the Lord's Supper as practised by the Johannine communities stands as the intangible atmosphere behind the whole discourse and the miracle of the feeding, says that John is not really speaking about the eucharist and even less is he offering eucharistic teaching.⁹

Still others interpret the passage as witnessing to the incarnation in a polemic way against docetic ideas. Thus Schweizer sees the words about eating and drinking the flesh and blood as expressing the believer's acknowledgement that Jesus has truly come in the flesh and that no less than this was necessary for his salvation.¹⁰ So also P. Borgen: "The purpose is not to give doctrinal instruction about the eucharist as such, but rather to use the eucharistic ideas to throw light upon the reality of the incarnation."¹¹

J.D.G. Dunn thinks the situation in the life of the Church to be discerned as background for this chapter is one in which reaction against a docetic christology has led to a literalistic interpretation of the eucharist which emphasizes the physical act. "John addresses this situation and deals with both errors - forcefully with the docetism, more delicately with the sacramentalism."¹²

R.H. Strachan writes that the thought of verses 51-59 "centres around the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, but flows beyond it."¹³

9. H. Strathmann, Das Evangelium nach Johannes (Göttingen, 1963), p. 219f.

10. E. Schweizer, "Das johanneische Zeugnis vom Herrenmahl" Evangelische Theologie 12, 1952-1953, 361.

11. P. Borgen, Bread From Heaven (Leiden, 1965), p. 186.

12. J.D.G. Dunn, "John VI - A Eucharistic Discourse?" NTS 17, 1971, 337.

13. R.H. Strachan, The Fourth Gospel. Its Significance and Environment (London, 1941), p. 189.

However, he says "the primary reference of flesh and blood is not to the sacrament, but to the demand for faith in a Christ who became 'flesh and blood', i.e. truly man."¹⁴ C.J. Wright says: "The Evangelist is seeking to ethicize and spiritualize the sacramental rites of the Church ... to express, in the vivid, realistic language that was becoming hallowed in the Church, the truth that the historic Jesus is the mediator - and supremely in his death - of that Divine sustenance required by the spirit of man if he is to know eternal life."¹⁵

Käsemann admits there may be allusions to the sacrament in the sixth chapter but asserts, "It is not proper to read our expectations into the text of John, so long as a non-sacramental interpretation is possible."¹⁶ With regard to the anti-docetic realism in the Gospel he says, "The Johannine trend runs in the very opposite direction."¹⁷

In view of this wealth of controversial opinion on the author's own purpose in writing as he did, it is not intended to evaluate these contemporary interpretations and so to clarify or further confuse our understanding of the passage. Rather our purpose is to discover how it was understood in the earliest period of the Church's exegesis. The study will therefore take the form of an historical survey of the fathers' thought on the chapter. Each author will be studied in turn

14. Ibid., p. 192.

15. C.J. Wright, Jesus the Revelation of God, His Mission and Message According to St. John (London, 1950), p. 179f.

16. E. Käsemann, The Testament of Jesus ET G. Krodel (London, 1968), p. 32.

17. Ibid., p. 44.

with some attention being paid to his general understanding of Scripture and exegesis whenever his ideas and methods on that subject have been more or less fully expressed. Attention will then be given to comparisons, contrasts and recurring themes in the writers studied with special notice being drawn to those verses which interested them most and an attempt made to show that certain patristic interpretations are still to be found in the exegesis of some recent commentators.

This study does not claim to be exhaustive. We have not examined every author during the period covered who ever made a reference to John vi. Nor do we claim to have mentioned every instance in an individual writer's work in which he cites or alludes to a verse in that chapter. It is believed, however, that the survey is reasonably representative of the thought of the Church up to the time of Augustine and Cyril of Alexandria who form the terminus of the study.

The survey naturally contains a good deal of quotation from the fathers' works for it has been thought better to let them speak for themselves than continually to paraphrase what they wrote with the danger of altering its meaning in the process. The quotations are normally in English translation. For this purpose and in my reading of the fathers I have had constant recourse to the standard translations of their writings as well as consulting them in the original languages. The translations as used in the thesis have sometimes been altered in the interests of a more up to date phraseology. For Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on John I have worked from the Latin translation of Vosté. The English rendering in this case is my own, except when noted. For his Liber ad Baptizandos I have used Mingana's translation

in Woodbrooke Studies VI. Tatian's Diatessaron has been read in the English translation of Hogg in the Ante-Nicene Christian Library Vol. ix, Ephrem's commentary on it in Leloir's French translation. For the Apocryphal Letter of James I have worked from the English and French translations in Epistula Jacobi Apocrypha edited by Malinine and others. The Gospel of Philip has been read in the English renderings of Wilson and de Catanzaro and in the French of Ménard, the Acts of Thomas in the English translation of Klijn.

Although comment upon the discourse is understandably more frequent than upon the earlier portions of the chapter, the whole chapter has been studied because a wider range of patristic exegesis was thus made possible, including as it does narrative as well as sermonic, miraculous as well as doctrinal passages. There is critical comment that witnesses to the unity of the chapter. Dodd writes:

It appears therefore that the sequence of incidents gives a progression parallel to that which we find in the discourse. If so, then the narrative of the Feeding of the Multitude is not only significant or symbolical in itself, but it constitutes, in conjunction with the two incidents following, a complex *σημεῖον* which is elucidated, after the Johannine manner, in the appended 18 discourse.

Higgins says, "The whole of John 6 hangs together as a unit."¹⁹ Vawter asserts, "The following discourse reveals fully the true significance of

18. C.H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge, 1953), p. 345.

19. A.J.B. Higgins, The Historicity of the Fourth Gospel (London, 1960), p. 38. Cf also the remarks of Bligh and Brown *supra* p. 2.

the two foregoing 'signs'".²⁰ This was recognized by some of the fathers in the sense that they saw the discourse as teaching occasioned by the need to interpret the significance of the miracle of the feeding. Theodore says that John repeats the miracle, although it has been narrated by others, on account of the teaching drawn from it by Jesus (Vosté, p. 93). Augustine also points out that "he took occasion from the eating of the bread to deliver many lessons, dealing pre-eminently with divine things" (De Cons. Evang. ii.102, CSEL 43, p. 211). This feature, however, is by no means always brought out by them in exegesis.

Quotation from the Fourth Gospel and comment upon it do not appear until relatively late in comparison with most other parts of the New Testament. Sanders contrasts this early sparing use of it by orthodox writers with its popularity in Gnostic groups and concludes that it did not gain full acceptance by the Church until Irenaeus had demonstrated that the Gnostics had not interpreted it correctly.²¹ Käsemann goes so far as to say, "The Gospel would fit best into a side tributary apart from the general stream yet connected with it" and suggests that it "did not grow up within the realm of the Church known to us through the New Testament."²² J.M. Robinson, reviewing recent opinions on its origin and sources,²³ draws attention to Bornkamm's

20. B. Vawter, "The Gospel According to John" The Jerome Biblical Commentary (London, 1968), p. 436.

21. J.N. Sanders, The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church (Cambridge, 1943), p. 86.

22. E. Käsemann, The Testament of Jesus ET G. Krodel (London, 1968), p. 39.

23. J.M. Robinson, "The Johannine Trajectory" Trajectories through Early Christianity (Philadelphia, 1971), pp. 232-268.

criticism of Käsemann's view that John's picture of Jesus is in the form of a naive docetism.²⁴ Bornkamm thinks that the tradition from which John drew was responsible for whatever docetism is to be found in his christology and that the Fourth Gospel shows not only the use of such a tradition but, just as clearly, John's criticism of it.²⁵

Once it was recognized as Scripture, however, there is no doubt that it was held in the highest esteem by the Church. In comparison with the Synoptic Gospels it was felt to be of a loftier character, since it dealt more explicitly with the divinity of Christ. In relating the circumstances surrounding the origin of the Gospels, Clement of Alexandria wrote: "But last of all John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospels, being urged by his friends and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel" (Eusebius, Hist. Eccl. 6.14, GCS 2², p. 550). Origin held it to be the high point of all Scripture: "The Gospels are the first fruits of all the Scriptures, but of the Gospels, that of John is the first fruits" (Com. in Joh. 1.6, GCS 4, p. 8). He adds: "None of these plainly declared his Godhead as John does" (Ibid.).

John was seen by Theodore as wishing to record what had been omitted by others and particularly the teaching regarding Christ's divinity so that in time to come that doctrine might not be forgotten (Vosté, p. 3, l. 35f). Because of this emphasis on the divine nature

24. E. Käsemann, op. cit., p. 26.

25. G. Bornkamm, "Zur Interpretation des Johannesevangeliums" EvT 28, 1968, 21.

of Jesus Augustine says that John is carried to greater heights than the other evangelists (De Cons. Evang. i.7, CSEL 43, p. 6). Chrysostom notes one of the characteristics of the Gospel when he says: "This evangelist most of all desired to employ the greater part of his book on the discourses and sermons" (Hom. in Joh. xlii.1, PG LIX.239).

Accepting unquestioned the tradition that the author was John, the son of Zebedee, the fathers speak of his early lack of education to underline the inspired nature of his achievement. Hilary writes: "There stands by my side to guide me through the difficulties I have enunciated a poor fisherman, ignorant, uneducated, fishing lines in hand, clothes dripping, feet muddy, wholly a seaman. Consider and decide whether it is a greater feat to raise the dead or impart to an untrained mind the knowledge of such teaching for he says, 'In the beginning was the Word'." (De Trin. ii.13, PL X.60). Chrysostom stresses the poverty and ignorance of anyone engaged in fishing and asserts that John "never learned letters either before or after he accompanied Christ" (Hom. in Joh. ii.1, PG LIX.30).

The fathers are eloquent, even extravagant, in praise of John. Ambrose wrote: "He transcended the clouds, transcended the powers of heaven, transcended the angels, and found the Word in the beginning and saw the Word with God" (In Lucam, praef. 3, CSEL 32, p. 5), and elsewhere said: "Whatever he spoke is a mystery" (De Sac. iii.11, CSEL 73, p. 43).

Basil asserts: "The most mighty-voiced herald of the actual gospel proclamation who uttered words loud beyond all hearing and lofty beyond all understanding is John, the son of thunder" (Hom. xvi, PG XXXI.472).

Chrysostom says of him: "He will say nothing to us as a man but what he says he will say from the depths of the spirit, from those secret things which before they came to pass the very angels knew not, since they too have learned by the voice of John with us and by us the things which we know" (Hom. in Joh. 1.2, PG LIX.26), and again: "All he says is infallible, and standing as it were upon a rock, he never shifts his ground. For since he has been thought worthy to be in the most secret places, and has the Lord of all speaking within him, he is subject to nothing that is human" (Hom. in Joh. 11.2, PG LIX.31).

In contrast to this Augustine recognizes that even John is subject to human limitations: "Because he was inspired he said something; if he had not been inspired, he would have said nothing; but as he was a man inspired, he spoke not the whole as it is, but what a man could he spoke" (Tract. in Joh. 1.1, CCSL 36, p.1). But Augustine too has high praise for him as "one who has passed beyond the cloud in which the whole earth is wrapped and who has reached the liquid heaven from which with clearest and steadiest mental eye he is able to look upon God the Word" (De Cons. Evang. 1.7, CSEL 43, p. 6f).

Origen thinks that in the interpretation of a writing of such spiritual greatness the exegete is in need of inspiration no less than the author, for "no one can apprehend the meaning of it unless he has lain on Jesus' breast and from Jesus has received Mary to be his mother also" (Com. in Joh. 1.6, GCS 4, p. 8).

It will be evident from our study that not all the fathers enjoyed that degree of inspiration in their exposition of John. There are, nevertheless, occasions when their comment indicates an awareness

of the deeper meanings inherent in the words of the Gospel. It was due to their recognition of these greater depths that it held with them the place of honour among the four Gospels.

I. SECOND CENTURY WRITERS

Ignatius

The Fourth Gospel is thought by most scholars to have been written towards the end of the first century. Prior to the time when direct quotation from it begins to appear in the writings of the second century, there are authors whose similarity of thought and phrase to passages in John has led commentators to suggest that they may have known and used the Fourth Gospel. The sixth chapter supplies instances of such correspondence, although it is by no means the portion of the Gospel with which the majority of such similarities are found. Braun has shown that Johannine motifs were prominent in the Church's devotional life early in the second century, investigating among many sources even the decorations in the catacombs of Rome.¹ Pollard, commenting on his work, says: "This makes it difficult to suppose that the writings in which these motifs occur were not known and highly respected."²

Of the authors who show similarities of this kind the earliest is Ignatius. Much has been written in the attempt to show whether or not the Fourth Gospel was a source of his theology. His remarks about the eucharist and his use of the terms 'flesh' and 'blood' bear comparison with the discourse on the bread of life. A passage from

1. F.M. Braun, Jean le Théologien et son Évangile dans l'Église Ancienne (Paris, 1959), pp. 69-300.

2. T.E. Pollard, Johannine Christology and the Early Church (Cambridge, 1970), p. 24.

his letter to the Romans may serve to show the kind of relationship that exists between his writings and the Gospel. He says:

My desire has been crucified and in me there is no matter-loving fire; there is water living and speaking in me, saying from within me, 'Come to the Father'. I take no pleasure in the food of corruption or in the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ (who was of the seed of David) and for drink I desire his blood, which is imperishable love.

(Romans vii.2, SC 10, p. 134f)

There is very little verbal identity here. However, ὕδωρ ζῶν is a phrase in John iv.10 and although the metaphor is not applied in just the same way, John iv.14 speaks of this water as welling up within the believer. Nevertheless, it must be admitted there are other sources from which the phrase ὕδωρ ζῶν might have been derived.³ The expression 'food of corruption' (τροφὴ φθορᾶς) may be compared with τὴν βρώσιν τὴν ἀπολλυμένην of the Gospel (vi.27). The bread of God (ἄρτον θεοῦ) is the same phrase as is found in John vi.33 except for the article and is identified as in the Gospel (vi.51) with the flesh of Christ. The use of σὰρξ is characteristic of Ignatius and forms the most striking point of similarity with John's

3. E. g., Odes of Solomon xi.6f, "And speaking waters touched my lips from the fountain of the Lord plenteously: and I drank and was inebriated with the living water that doth not die," contains similar phraseology (ET J.H. Bernard, The Odes of Solomon Cambridge, 1912, p. 72). C.K. Barrett speaks of the Odes as "an earlier work" in relation to the work of Tatian and Irenaeus (The Gospel According to St. John London, 1955, p. 95). J. Quasten says: "There are strong indications that they were written during the second century, most probably in the first half of it" (Patrology Vol. I, Utrecht, 1950, p. 161). R.M. Grant writes: "It is probable that they were known to Ignatius of Antioch" ("The Odes of Solomon and the Church of Antioch" JBL 63, 1944, p. 370).

usage in the discourse. Ignatius uses it again in his letters to the Philadelphians (iv) and the Smyrneans (vii), in each case with reference to the eucharist. In the latter passage he says the eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. It may be observed also that in the passage quoted above *πόμα τὸ αἶμα αὐτοῦ* shows a similarity of thought with *τὸ αἶμα μου ἀληθὴς ἐστὶ πόσις* of John vi.55.

In this passage Ignatius does not relate the flesh and blood directly to the Church's eucharistic worship. That thought, however, could hardly have been far from his mind. It may be that in some parts of the early Church the word *σάρξ* was used of the eucharistic bread, although the prevailing usage came to prefer *σῶμα* in accordance with the scriptural accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper. Higgins refers to the possibility of such a tradition of the eucharistic words of Jesus.⁴ Justin makes use of *σάρξ* in this way when describing the eucharist and its meaning for Christians (*I Apol.* lxvi). Whether this usage was derived from the Johannine Gospel or whether Ignatius and Justin and the Fourth Evangelist all merely witness to an early liturgical usage has been much debated. Jeremias regards John and Ignatius as evidence for such a tradition.⁵ Brown notes that Antioch was "a city where the Semitic tradition of Jesus' words may

4. A.J.B. Higgins, The Lord's Supper in the New Testament (London, 1952), p. 83.

5. J. Jeremias, The Eucharistic Words of Jesus ET N. Perrin (London, 1966), p. 201.

have been preserved." He suggests that Jesus' words would be the Aramaic equivalent of 'This is my flesh'.⁶

Lebreton believed that John's Gospel "had a great influence on St. Ignatius"⁷ and refers to St. John as Ignatius' master.⁸ Lietzmann also thinks he was influenced to some extent by John⁹ and speaks of his christology as "enriched from John".¹⁰ Richardson, more cautious, says none of the Johannine reminiscences is decisive.¹¹ With that opinion I think most scholars would agree. Richardson has shown that in both ideas and phraseology Ignatius is more Pauline than Johannine but points out that only in relation to the eucharist does Ignatius display ideas that are unique to John and himself.¹² These ideas are the connection of resurrection to eternal life with the partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ (Eph. xx.2, Smyr. vii.1, SC 10, pp. 90, 160; Jn vi.54) and the affirmation of the reality of the flesh and

6. R.E. Brown, The Gospel According to John (i-xii) (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), p. 285.

7. J. Lebreton & J. Zeiller, The History of the Primitive Church Vol. II, ET E.C. Messenger (London, 1944), p. 358.

8. Ibid., p. 355.

9. H. Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church ET B.L. Woolf (London, 1937), p. 317.

10. Ibid., p. 323.

11. C.C. Richardson, tr. & ed., Early Christian Fathers, LCC 1 (London, 1953), p. 79.

12. C.C. Richardson, The Christianity of Ignatius of Antioch (New York, 1935), pp. 68-75.

blood in opposition to docetic heresy found in Smyrneans vii.1 and assumed to lie behind John vi.51-56. Although literary dependence on the Fourth Gospel cannot be proved, Richardson does not rule out the possibility that Ignatius knew it and had some of its phrases in mind while writing his letters.¹³ R.M. Grant has said: "That Ignatius used the Gospel of John seems highly probable" and makes the suggestion that "perhaps Ignatius knew its author instead of, or even in addition to, the book itself."¹⁴

Sanders, on the other hand, considers the similarities are sufficient only for the probability of a common tradition of ideas and language from which they both drew.¹⁵ This judgment seems too severe. Knowledge of a work does not necessarily lead to quotation from it or exact reproduction of its thought. Any decision between the positions of Richardson and Sanders is necessarily subjective since the evidence is not sufficient to be decisive one way or the other. I think that one may at least allow the possibility of Ignatius' knowledge of the Fourth Gospel.

Richardson has indicated the many parallels in thought between Ignatius and John, while at the same time showing that many are to be found also in Paul. This strong likeness between them, particularly in their thoughts about the eucharist, may lead one to feel that

13. Ibid., p. 75.

14. R.M. Grant, After the New Testament (Philadelphia, 1967), p. 41.

15. J.N. Sanders, The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church (Cambridge, 1943), p. 14.

Ignatius gives some indication of how he at least and the Christian community he represents would have understood the affirmations concerning the Lord's flesh and blood in the discourse if they had read it.

Ignatius' reference in Ephesians xx.2 to the bread as "the medicine of immortality, our antidote to ensure that we shall not die but live in Jesus Christ forever"¹⁶ has been interpreted to indicate that the sacrament was already being regarded almost as a magical rite that would insure immortality. The phrase, however, should be understood in the light of Ignatius' other references to the eucharist and to the flesh and blood of Christ. He calls on the Trallians to renew themselves "in faith, the Lord's flesh, and in love, the blood of Jesus Christ" (Trall. viii, SC 10, p. 116f). Again he says the blood of Christ is "eternal and lasting joy" (Philad. inscr., SC 10, p. 140), and in the passage in Romans quoted above he calls it imperishable love. He speaks of "fleeing to the gospel as to the flesh of Jesus" (Philad. v, SC 10, p. 144). The elements of the sacred meal speak to him of all that the passion of his Lord implies. Just as they are for John, they are a reminder of the historical reality of the suffering and death of Jesus and as such have effectively indicated the gulf that divides Ignatius' followers from the docetists who abstain from participation in the sacrament (Smyr. vii.1, SC 10, p. 160). One is reminded of the disciples who "walked no more with him" because of the realism of Jesus' words, and of the question "Will you also go away?" (Jn vi.66, 67).

16. ET H. Bettenson, ed. & tr., The Early Christian Fathers (London, 1969), p. 42.

Ignatius' phrase 'the medicine of immortality' is scarcely more indicative of a superstitious regard for the supper than John vi.51 and just as our interpretation of that verse must be modified by what is said of the flesh and spirit in verse 63, so our understanding of Ignatius' concept of the eucharist should include all he says about it. The use of a medical metaphor for the sacrament may be compared to a similar reference to heresy as a 'deadly drug' (Trall. vi.2, SC 10, p. 116). As Grant points out, this expression in Trallians should weigh against too literal an interpretation of the phrase 'medicine of immortality'.¹⁷ Ignatius makes it clear that faith and love are of the essence of the sacrament and these cannot be the product of any magical rite.

It is instructive to note what he regards as of supreme value. He advises Polycarp to think on unity "than which nothing is better" (Poly. i.2, SC 10, p. 170). The eucharist is the symbol of this unity which he believes is essential to the Christian brotherhood (Eph. xx.2, Philad. iv, Smyr. viii, SC 10, pp. 90, 142, 162). Twice he asserts faith and love are to be preferred above all else (Mag. i.2, Smyr. vi, SC 10, pp. 94, 160). These are all things of the spirit.

Ignatius more than once expresses his anxiety to 'attain to God' (Mag. xiv, Rom. ii.1, v.3, Smyr. xi.1, SC 10, pp. 106, 126, 132, 164) and urges Polycarp also, as God's athlete, to strive towards that same end for which the prize is imperishability and eternal life (Poly.

17. R.M. Grant, Ignatius of Antioch Vol. IV of The Apostolic Fathers ed. R.M. Grant (Camden, N.J., 1966), p. 76.

ii.3, SC 10, p. 172). For Ignatius at least, the road to this goal is through martyrdom. In Romans he speaks as though he were by no means sure that he himself would reach it, either through his own failure to endure or the intervention of the Roman church on his behalf (Rom. iii.2, vii.2, SC 10, pp. 128, 134; cf Trall. iv and xii.3, SC 10, pp. 114, 120). He is ready to endure the torments of the arena to attain to God. If he believed that participation in the eucharist automatically ensured eternal life, there would seem to be no point in such anxiety to suffer in order to win the same prize. At the same time he tells the Trallians that they may escape death through believing in the death of Christ who had died for them (Trall. ii.1, SC 10, p. 112). In spite of what he says to Polycarp (ii.3, SC p. 172), one has the feeling that attaining to God is something more and better than just eternal life. Yet taking all these expressions together his words seem to deny any magical quality in the effect of the eucharist.

Corwin is right in asserting that "any analysis which attempts to answer the question whether he speaks realistically or symbolically is doomed to defeat, for the fact is, he does both."¹⁸ The same might be said of the writer of the sixth chapter of the Fourth Gospel. It seems only just, however, to say that Ignatius' realism is no more an expression of superstitious sacramentalism than is that of the Johannine author.

In considering Ignatius' relationship to this chapter of the Gospel, it may be noted that he witnesses to a number of other doctrines

18. V. Corwin, St. Ignatius and Christianity in Antioch (New Haven, 1960), p. 208.

contained in the chapter or which may be deduced from statements made there. The reality of the incarnation is a constant theme of his letters (Eph. vii, xviii.2, Mag. xi, Trall. ii.1, xi, Philad. viii.2, Smyr. i, ii, iii, Poly. iii.2, SC 10, pp. 74, 86, 104, 112, 120, 150, 154f, 172). The sixth chapter of the Gospel also has clear indications of the human Jesus of history - his birth from Mary (vs 42), the reality of his flesh (vs 52), and his sacrifice to come (vs 51). Ignatius refers to the pre-existence of Christ (Mag. vi.1, SC 10, p. 98) which is to be inferred from John vi.41 and 62. The indwelling of Christ in the believer promised in John vi.56 is spoken of in the letter to the Magnesians (xii, SC 10, p. 106). The relationship of the believer to Christ is seen as paralleling that of Christ to the Father both in John vi.57 and in Philadelphians vii.2 (SC 10, p. 148). The certainty of the Christian's salvation is stated in John vi.37, 39 and is suggested in Ignatius' phrase Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, τὸ ἀδιάκριτον ἡμῶν ζῆν in Ephesians iii.2 which C.C. Richardson translates "that life from which we can't be torn."¹⁹

In spite of the lack of proof of any literary dependence on the Fourth Gospel, a very close affinity is apparent in the thought of Ignatius to that of John and this is particularly so with respect to their concept of the eucharist and its symbolism as the flesh and blood of Jesus to whose passion they trusted for their hope of life eternal.

19. C.C. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers, p. 88.

Justin Martyr

The writings of Justin Martyr are in much the same category as those of Ignatius with respect to their dependence on the Fourth Gospel. Sanders and Braun both discuss the passages which seem to echo the words of John but arrive at very different conclusions. Sanders thinks they show only a family likeness "being the first tentative use which was made of the Fourth Gospel by an orthodox writer".²⁰ Braun does not accept Sanders' judgement but believes that Justin's dependence on John's Gospel is certain.²¹ Nunn also thinks the link between Justin and the Fourth Gospel is closer than Sanders will allow.²² Wiles asserts there is at least a high probability for Justin's knowledge of John's Gospel²³ and in this he agrees with Barrett.²⁴

Justin's description of Christian worship in his First Apology contains the only passage which has been thought to reflect anything in the sixth chapter of the Gospel. In it Justin states what Christians are taught about the bread and wine of the eucharist.

20. J.N. Sanders, op. cit., p. 31.

21. F.M. Braun, op. cit., pp. 290f.

22. H.P.V. Nunn, "The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church" EQ 16, 1944, 135.

23. M.F. Wiles, The Spiritual Gospel (Cambridge, 1960), p. 99.

24. C.K. Barrett, The Gospel According to John, p. 94.

He says:

For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour being incarnate by God's word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food eucharistized by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation,²⁵ is flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus.

(I Apol. lxvi, PG VI.423f)

As in Ignatius there is again the striking use of the combination *σάρκα καὶ αἷμα* in connection with the eucharist which seems to imply a realistic conception of the elements and recalls these words as employed in the discourse in the Gospel.

Although this passage of Justin's work is of great value as a picture of the early worshipping community, it is not as clear as one could wish with respect to his theological understanding of the rite. Justin appears to draw a parallel between the action of the Word in taking flesh and blood at the incarnation and the effect of the word of prayer²⁶ over the bread and wine which are then said to be flesh and blood of Jesus. Even this, however, may be reading more into the words than Justin intends. Goodenough says that any attempt from what Justin says to explain how the bread and wine may be called flesh and blood of Christ is to go beyond the evidence.²⁷ Barnard

25. ET based on C.C. Richardson, Early Christian Fathers, p. 236.

26. The Greek phrase is ambiguous: δι' εὐχῆς λόγου τοῦ παρ' αὐτοῦ.

27. E.R. Goodenough, The Theology of Justin Martyr (Jena, 1923), p. 275.

agrees with that conclusion and warns against reading into Justin's words later theories such as transubstantiation.²⁸

Reference to other passages in which Justin speaks of the eucharist do not throw much further light on the matter. Three times in his Dialogue with Trypho he has occasion to mention the eucharist and in each case it is seen as calling to mind the sufferings of the Saviour (Dial. xli, lxx, cxvii, PG VI.564, 642, 745). In chapter lxx it is in remembrance also of his being made flesh and blood in the incarnation. The giving of thanks in the rite is stressed in chapters xli and cxvii. We are told that thanksgiving is made for the creation of the world, for the redemption of man and for the defeat of the powers of evil. An important aspect of the sacrament is therefore as a memorial of the work of Christ.

In chapter cxvii he says that the only perfect and well pleasing sacrifices to God are prayer and giving of thanks. Yet with reference to the prophecy of Malachi 1.10-12 he calls the eucharist a sacrifice, making it clear that the bread and cup are themselves the sacrifice (Dial. xli) and again in First Apology lxvi he applies the term *εὐχαριστία* to the elements rather than to the rite as a whole. None of these passages show any real dependence upon the bread of life discourse. The use of flesh and blood instead of body and blood is the only actual correspondence between them. Evidence for Justin's knowledge of the Gospel as a whole depends upon a comparison with other parts of John's work.

28. L.W. Barnard, Justin Martyr. His Life and Thought (Cambridge, 1967), p. 143.

R.M. Grant has drawn attention to a few fragments of Justin's work that are found in the writings of other authors.²⁹ One of them, which he describes as "almost certainly genuine", in Methodius' Discourse on the Resurrection as preserved in Photius' Biblioteca,

Codex 234 (PG CIII.1128), reads:

κληρονομεῖσθαι μὲν τὸ ἀποθνήσκον,
κληρονομεῖν δὲ τὸ ζῶν.
ἀποθνήσκειν μὲν σάρκα,
ζῆν δὲ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Grant translates: What dies is inherited from; what lives inherits.
The flesh dies; the kingdom of heaven lives.

Can we see in this saying a faint echo of the thought of John vi.63? Both are couched in brief epigrammatic form and contrast what dies (is of no avail), signified by the flesh, with that which has and gives life. The contrast is with the kingdom of heaven in Justin rather than with the Spirit or the words of Christ. But in John Christ's flesh is the living bread which has come down from heaven (vs 51). It is because of its source in the spiritual world, not because it is flesh, that it gives life. This fragment may at least be seen as a corrective to the very realistic ideas which can so easily be inferred from the language used in First Apology lxvi, just as we must take verse 63 as modifying the thought of the earlier verses of the chapter. Whether in its original context the fragment had any reference to Justin's understanding of the eucharist we do not know.

29. R.M. Grant, "Fragments of Greek Apologists and Irenaeus" Biblical and Patristic Studies in Honour of Robert Pierce Casey, J.N. Birdsall & R.W. Thomson, edd. (Freiberg, 1963), pp. 182f.

Methodius has quoted it in a passage expounding Paul's words "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. xv.50) where again the combination *σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα* is found.

The writings of Justin are inconclusive for our purpose in tracing the Church's understanding of the discourse on the bread of life. They do not show a clear enough contact with the Gospel at this point to allow any sure conclusions as to how he would have interpreted the arresting affirmations of the sixth chapter. No clearly defined theology of the sacrament can be deduced from Justin's work.

Irenaeus

The various Gnostic groups of the latter part of the second century used the Fourth Gospel, particularly the prologue, in their fantastic descriptions of the origin of the cosmos. As Lewis has shown in his detailed analysis of the evidence for Irenaeus' knowledge of John's Gospel,³⁰ Irenaeus made extensive use of it in refuting these Gnostic heresies and in presenting his exposition of the apostolic doctrines. Pollard thinks that through his use of it in the interests of refuting Gnosticism the Church's suspicion of the Fourth Gospel, which was the result of its popularity among Gnostics, was dispelled.³¹ It was seldom, however, from the sixth chapter that

30. F.G. Lewis, The Irenaeus Testimony to the Fourth Gospel - Its Extent, Meaning and Value (Chicago, 1903), pp. 10-13.

31. T.E. Pollard, op. cit., p. 42.

Irenaeus drew in support of his teaching. Only once does he make a significant reference to it.

He introduces the feeding of the five thousand in conjunction with the miracle of the wine at Cana as though indicating a sacramental significance in them. Although he does not specifically mention the sacrament, he shows the Lord's actions as revealing by visible and understandable signs what is invisible and incomprehensible. He says:

Taking the loaves which the earth had produced, and giving thanks, and on the other occasion making water wine, he satisfied those who sat down, and gave drink to those who had been invited to the marriage; showing that the God who made the earth and ordered it to bear fruit, who established the waters and brought forth the fountains, was he who in these last times bestowed on mankind, by his Son, the blessing of food and the grace of drink - the incomprehensible being revealed by the comprehensible and the invisible by the visible, since there is none beyond him but he exists in the bosom of the Father.

(Adv. Haer. III.xi.5, Harvey II, p. 44)

This certainly sounds as if he were thinking of the representative nature of the bread and wine in the eucharist. However, lest we think that he seems in this place to look upon them as simply representative signs, his other passages on the eucharist should be recalled. In Adv. Haer. V.ii.3, affirming the capability of the flesh to receive God's gift of eternal life, he says:

When, therefore, the mingled cup and the manufactured bread receives the Word of God and the eucharist becomes the body of Christ, from which the substance of our flesh is increased and supported, how can they affirm that the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God, which is eternal life, which (flesh) is nourished from the body and blood of the Lord, and is a member of him?

(Harvey II, p. 319f)

Again in speaking of the eucharist as an offering of the first fruits of the earth to God he says that 'the bread over which thanks have been given is the body of their Lord and the cup his blood' (Adv. Haer. IV,xviii.4, Harvey II, p. 204). A little later he writes:

For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.

(Adv. Haer. IV.xviii.5, Harvey II, p.205f)

This is the same kind of realistic language that was used by Ignatius and Justin. The passage from Book V of Adv. Haer. is particularly like that in Justin's Apology. Irenaeus also connects the eating of the eucharist with eternal life as they are related in John vi.54 and in Ignatius.

It would appear that Irenaeus thought that some kind of change in the elements took place and associated it with what was said over them, which he variously describes as the Word of God, the invocation of God, and thanksgiving. Whether he refers to a prayer for the action of the Word or to the prayer of thanks or to the repetition of the words of Jesus at the Last Supper, we cannot be sure. Hitchcock says that Irenaeus' assertion that, even after consecration, the eucharist consists of two realities is enough to show that he did not envisage a change such as is implied by transubstantiation.³² Though

32. F.R.M. Hitchcock, Irenaeus of Lugdunum (Cambridge, 1914), p. 276.

it may be, and probably is, true that Irenaeus did not hold any developed theory of transubstantiation, this is claiming too much for the evidence we possess. Hitchcock is carried away by his desire to claim Irenaeus for the reformed church view of the sacrament. His meaning is not all that clear.

Lawson makes reference to the view of Beuzart that, in attacking Marcus' magical rites in which wine was supposed to become blood, Irenaeus disowns any idea of transubstantiation (Adv. Haer. I.xiii.2, Harvey I, p. 115f).³³ This claim also goes beyond the evidence.

Like the earlier fathers Irenaeus is content to use the realistic expressions found in the Gospels without attempting an analysis or explanation of them. His words, however, appear to go beyond his predecessors in that they imply that some change which he does not define occurs in the bread and wine during the rite. Irenaeus was not writing a theology of the sacrament but was introducing it incidentally as a means of refuting the Gnostic doctrine regarding the manhood of Christ. For one who used the Fourth Gospel so extensively it is interesting to note that the sixth was one of the chapters he used least. Although Irenaeus shows some development in eucharistic thought beyond previous writers, he does not further the inquiry into the Church's understanding of the bread of life discourse.

33. J. Lawson, The Biblical Theology of St. Irenaeus (London, 1948), p. 267.

II. GNOSTICISM

As has already been mentioned, the Fourth Gospel was a favourite among Gnostics. Before examining some of the references to the sixth chapter in their writings, it may be well to consider briefly the question of what Gnosticism was. The term is used to designate a syncretistic religious phenomenon of the early Christian era. Wilson has defined the term as "a general description of a series of related heretical schools which menaced the Church, particularly in the second century A. D."¹ Bianchi says that Gnosticism should be identified with "a certain group of systems of the Second Century A.D." and defines gnosis as "knowledge of the divine mysteries reserved for an élite."² The difficulty in defining it arises from the fact that there was a considerable variety of belief and practice from one Gnostic group or sect to another. As Van Barren points out, "it is not possible to isolate one or a few elements as constituting the essentials" of what the Gnostics believed.³ The best that can be done is to give a list of characteristics without implying that all Gnostic sects subscribed to all of them.

Gnostics held that they had received by revelation a special

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1. R. McL. Wilson, The Gnostic Problem (London, 1958), p. 66.
 2. U. Bianchi, The Origins of Gnosticism (Leiden, 1967), p. xxvi.
 3. P. Van Barren, "Towards a Definition of Gnosticism" The Origins of Gnosticism, ed. U. Bianchi (Leiden, 1967), p. 174.

knowledge ($\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\iota\varsigma$) necessary for salvation. They had thus become aware that within each of them was a divine seed or spark, the true self, imprisoned within this world of sense perception. The characteristic form in which gnosis was expressed was myth, often taken over from other religions and altered the better to express Gnostic ideas. Gnosis was concerned with the origin of this world, how the divine seed had become entangled in it and how it might gain release from it and return to the spiritual world from which it had come. Their myths showed a great interest in cosmology. Saving gnosis, while comprising the whole content of what the Gnostics taught about God, man and the world, was also, in a more practical sense, knowledge of the secret names and formulas required for the successful ascent of the true self after death back to God.⁴

God was conceived as transcendent but not as the creator of the material universe, from which he was separated by a series of emanations or aeons. One of these emanations, sometimes identified with the God of the Old Testament, was the creator. Gnosticism, being essentially dualistic with spirit being set over against matter, looked upon the material world as evil. In the ethical sphere this dualism could lead either to asceticism or to libertinism. Grant speaks of the Gnostic emphasis on freedom. Gnosis brought release from the domination of the material creation and its evil powers. This freedom found expression in great variety of speculation and mythology for "Gnostics valued the

4. H. Jonas, The Gnostic Religion (Boston, 1958), p. 45.

free play of the creative imagination."⁵

Men were often divided in Gnostic thought into three classes, the πνευματικοί, those who having received gnosis were destined to be saved, the ψυχικοί, with freedom of will who, in accordance with their choice, might be either saved or doomed, and the ὑλικοί, who had no possibility of salvation.⁶ The imparting of saving gnosis was attributed to a heavenly redeemer whose appearance marked the reversal of the cosmic process described in the myths. Because of the dualism which held matter to be evil, anything like a true incarnation was unacceptable, and consequently the redeemer was of a docetic nature. In the Gnostic systems more nearly related to Christianity he was identified with Jesus. He might be represented as descending upon the man Jesus at his baptism and after imparting through him the knowledge of salvation, departing from him before his sufferings and death. Alternatively Jesus throughout his whole life might be represented as a kind of phantom, only appearing to be a man. Thus the Gnostics denied either his divinity or his humanity.

The relationship between Gnosticism and Christianity has been viewed by scholars in a number of ways of which Van Groningen has enumerated four main ones.⁷ 1. The ancient Church regarded Gnosticism as a false religion which had imitated and borrowed from Christianity.

5. R.M. Grant, Gnosticism and Early Christianity (New York, 1959), p. 12.

6. R. McL. Wilson, The Gnostic Problem, p. 208.

7. G. Van Groningen, First Century Gnosticism, Its Origins and Motifs (Leiden, 1967), pp. 15-17.

2. Harnack regarded it as the acute Hellenization of Christianity and the Gnostics as the first Christian theologians. 3. The Bultmann school views Gnosticism and Christianity as "simultaneously emerging religious movements"⁸ which mutually influenced each other. Paul and John are considered to be on the verge of Gnosticism. 4. Wilson regards Gnosticism as arising out of heterodox Judaism. Christianity both borrowed from and supplied Gnosticism with certain concepts and thus assisted its rise and development.

Whatever the exact relationship between them may have been, the early Church saw Gnosticism as a threat to its existence and to true doctrine.

Until the discovery of a number of primary sources in the nineteenth and the present century, the chief sources of our knowledge of Gnostic belief were the various refutations of their doctrines written by fathers of the early Church. The earliest commentary on the Fourth Gospel of which we have any record was written by the Gnostic Heracleon. We know of it only because Origen quoted from it in his own commentary on John, usually in adverse criticism of Heracleon's exegesis. Since the portion of Origen's work that would have covered the sixth chapter is missing, Heracleon's comments upon that passage are also lacking.

We now examine several examples of Gnostic interpretation of verses from John vi.

8. Ibid., p. 16.

The Naassenes

In the writings of Hippolytus is found our fullest account of the writings and beliefs of the Naassenes or Ophites, a Gnostic sect that took its name from the Hebrew word for the serpent. Although they took part in the rites of Cybele, the Great Mother, sang hymns to Attis (Ref. V.9, 9-10, GCS 3, p. 99f), and found a place in their worship for the practices of many different cults, and although their beliefs seem far removed from orthodox Christianity, they no doubt considered themselves as followers of Christ whom they regarded as Saviour.⁹

In his Refutation of All Heresies Hippolytus outlined the major points of their theology, incorporating in his account some examples of their exegesis of Scripture for they made frequent use of the Christian Scriptures as well as the writings of the philosophers and poets, especially Homer, to support and explain their teachings.

Their highly syncretistic doctrines included a belief in a First Man, Adam, and a Son of Man. This Adam, whom they held to be the originating cause of all things, was composed of three parts, rational, psychical and earthly. All three of these qualities, or "men", descended into Jesus to speak simultaneously through him so that all men, whether angelic, psychical or earthly, might hear him (Ref. V.6, 5-7, GCS 3, p. 73). "For there is one blessed nature of the Blessed Man above, Adamnas; one mortal nature below; and one kingless race

9. F. Legge, Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity Vol. II (Cambridge, 1915), p. 56.

which has ascended above" (Ref. V.8, 2, GCS 3, p. 89).¹⁰

The Naassene writer describes a temple in which stand two statues of naked men with upraised hands which, he says,

are images of the First Man and of the regenerated spiritual man who in every respect possesses the same nature as the first one. This is what the Saviour meant when he said, 'Unless you drink my blood and eat my flesh, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven; but if you drink the cup which I drink you cannot enter where I go.' For he knew the nature of each of his disciples, and he knew that each of them had to come to his proper nature, For he chose twelve disciples from the twelve tribes, and through them he spoke to every tribe; therefore not all hear the preachings of the twelve disciples, and if they do hear, they cannot accept them. For what is not according to nature is contrary to nature for them.

(Ref. V.8, 10-12, GCS 3, p. 91)¹¹

Naassene exegesis is often a fantastic patchwork of verses brought together in what appears to be a quite arbitrary way because of some common word or phrase or similarity of idea. Casey speaks of their minds as "completely fallen victims to the fascination of words and their accidental associations."¹² In their writings a phrase such as 'for this reason he said' or 'this is because the Lord said' often serves to introduce a scriptural verse which does not seem in any way to clarify the matter under discussion.

In the passage reproduced above there is quotation of or allusion to three biblical verses, Jn vi.53, Mk x.38, Jn viii.21, and

10. ET R.M. Grant, ed., Gnosticism: An Anthology (London, 1961), p. 106.

11. ET ibid., p. 107f.

12. R.P. Casey, "Naassenes and Ophites" JTS 27, 1926, 382.

possibly also to such verses as Jn vi.64 or Jn ii.25.

Christ, also called Hermes and the Logos (Ref. V.7, 30, 33, GCS 3, p. 85, 87) and the First Man, is the Saviour or guide of fallen souls to lead them back into the Pleroma (Ref. V.7, 37, V.8, 30, GCS 3, p. 88, 94). Their restoration is variously described, with suitable scriptural quotation, as an awakening from sleep (Eph. v. 14; Ref. V.7, 32, GCS 3, p. 86f), a rebirth by water and spirit (Jn iii.6; Ref. V.7, 40, GCS 3, p. 88), an entering through a gate (Gen. xxviii.17; Ref. V.8, 20, GCS 3, p. 92). In one of their hymns Jesus is represented as saying:

Therefore send me, Father; I will descend,
bearing the seals. I will pass through all
aeons; I will reveal all mysteries; I will
show the forms of gods; and I will deliver,
under the name of gnosis, the secrets of the
holy way.

(Ref. V.10, 2, GCS 3, p. 103f)¹³

Thus salvation, as in almost all Gnostic systems, was effected by the Perfect Man through the imparting of special knowledge and is reserved for the spiritual only (Ref. V.8, 44, GCS 3, p. 97). The Naassene says:

Jeremiah knew the Perfect Man, who is regenerated
"from water and spirit", not the carnal one. It
was Jeremiah who said, 'He is Man and who will
know him?' (Jer. xvii.9) - this shows how deep
and difficult to comprehend is the knowledge
(*γνῶσις*) of the Perfect Man. For the knowledge
of Man is the beginning of perfection while the
finished perfection is the knowledge of God.

(Ref. V.8, 37, 38, GCS 3, p. 96)¹⁴

13. ET R.M. Grant, ed., Gnosticism: An Anthology, p. 115.

14. Ibid., p. 112.

It would seem that it was necessary for Jesus himself to be saved for

Jesus says, 'I am the true gate' (Jn x.9). He who speaks thus is the Perfect Man, imprinted from above from the Unimprinted One. The Perfect Man cannot be saved unless he is regenerated and enters through this gate.

(Ref. V.8, 20, 21, GCS 3, p. 93)¹⁵

What rites or mysteries the Naassenes practised apart from their participation in the worship of other cults, we do not know. To their secrecy is probably due our lack of information. That they should quote John vi.53 in a context that bears upon regeneration and the preaching of the gnosis imparted by the Saviour might suggest that they had some rite resembling the eucharist but does not necessitate such a conclusion. Hippolytus, if he knew, does not inform us. Casey in speaking of their worship mentions baptism and an anointing with oil but says nothing of a ceremony resembling the eucharist.¹⁶ Jonas thinks some sacramental practice was the general rule in Gnostic sects.¹⁷ In any case redemption was not dependent alone upon a sacrament. The knowledge imparted by the Perfect Man and the reference to the preaching mediated through the twelve disciples suggests some further requirement other than simple participation in a rite. Indeed, if the "cup which I drink" refers to such a ceremony it is stated that the rite by itself is not sufficient to take them back into the Pleroma from whence the

15. Ibid., p. 109.

16. R.P. Casey, op. cit., p. 375.

17. H. Jonas, "Delimitation of the Gnostic Phenomenon - Typological and Historical" The Origins of Gnosticism ed. U. Bianchi (Leiden, 1967), p. 107.

Saviour has come. The redeemer's knowledge of the nature of each of his disciples might even indicate a belief in some kind of predestination. The Naassene writer, speaking of the mysteries which only the perfect Gnostics know, adds that the Saviour has declared, "No one can come to me unless my heavenly Father draws him" (Jn vi.44; Ref. V.8, 27, GCS 3, p. 94).

Two other passages have reference to eating and drinking. The poet Anacreon had written, says the Naassene, that his cup of wine told him mutely what sort he must become and interprets the words to imply that in the mystery he learns that he must become spiritual, not carnal. He then states that the miracle at Cana confirms this (Ref. V.8, 7, 8, GCS 3, p. 90). No doubt he thought of the change from water to wine as representing the change from carnal to spiritual. However, the Naassene exegesis throughout is so filled with analogies and associations of this kind that one cannot consider this instance to refer necessarily to any actual drinking. It is merely another way of picturing the reception of gnosis.

With reference to eating, Hippolytus says that the Naassenes say

'If you ate dead things and made them living,
what will you do if you eat living things?'
What they call 'living' are rational principles
and intelligences and men, pearls which the
Unimprinted One has cast as fruits into the
creation.

(Ref. V.8, 32, GCS 3, p. 95)¹⁸

18. ET R.M. Grant, ed., Gnosticism: An Anthology, p. 111.

The Naassene interpretation in this case shows definitely that no actual eating is intended. The word is used metaphorically. The saying which Hippolytus quotes here is found with some variation in the Gospel of Thomas. This and other sayings in Thomas which reflect ideas found in Hippolytus' account lead R.M. Grant to the conclusion that "many of the sources of the Gospel of Thomas have passed through Naassene hands."¹⁹ But the Gospel of Thomas uses the Fourth Gospel very sparingly.

We may say, then, that the passage in which the Naassene quotes Jesus' words about his flesh and blood cannot be taken with any certainty as pointing to a rite of a eucharistic nature, but is much more likely to be a way of referring to the assimilation of the lower nature of man to the spiritual nature of the Perfect One by means of the mystical gnosis imparted through his teaching.

The Apocryphal Letter of James

In the Apocryphal Letter of James there is a passage which, although it cannot be said to give an interpretation of the Johannine passage we are investigating, appears to quote part of John vi.63. It illustrates the way in which such a verse of Scripture might be employed by Gnostic writers in the exposition of their teaching. The passage is as follows:

19. R.M. Grant, "Notes on the Gospel of Thomas" VC 13, 1959, 179.

11. 35 For He knows the desire and
also what the flesh needs.
For it does not desire
the soul; for without the soul
the body does not sin, just as
12 the soul is not saved without the
spirit. But if the soul
is saved so as to be without evil and
the spirit also is saved, then the body
5 becomes sinless. For it is the spirit
which quickens the soul but it is the body
which kills it.
Which means that it (soul?) is itself which kills
its own self. Verily I say unto you that
10 He will by no means forgive the sin to the soul
nor the guilt to
the flesh. For none of those who have 20
worn the flesh shall be saved.

The threefold conception of the nature of man as body, soul and spirit, so common in Gnostic thought as well as in orthodox authors of the times, and found at least once in Scripture (I Thess. v.23), forms the background for the writer's teaching. Lines 5-7 express the opposition between body and spirit in much the same way as John vi.63. Unlike the biblical passage, however, which speaks only of flesh and spirit, the Gnostic writer gives prominence to the soul in the intermediate position with the power of free choice to associate itself with either the body or the spirit. On its decision depends its salvation or damnation, and by a wise choice for the higher spiritual life, it may be the means of saving the body also.

A similar conception is expressed by Origen in his commentary on Romans. He says:

20. ET Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha, edd. M. Malinine, H. Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till, R. Kasser (Zurich, 1968), pp. 125f.

Puto quod consuetudine sua Apostolus utatur etiam in hoc loco sciens mediam semper esse animam inter spiritum et carnem, et aut iungere se carni, et effici unum cum carne, aut sociare se spiritui, et esse unum cum spiritu: ex quo, si quidem cum carne sit, carnales homines fiant; si vero cum spiritu, spirituales.

(In Rom. I.5; PG xiv.850)

The weight of responsibility is placed by the Gnostic author upon the soul whereas the context in John would seem to place the greater emphasis on the work of Christ as Saviour and on the power of the Father to draw men to him (Jn vi.44, 65). The idea of suicide on the part of the soul, a logical development of the Gnostic writer's thought, does not appear in the Johannine passage. In the last lines quoted above, "those who have worn the flesh" must mean those who have chosen to wear the flesh. Otherwise the last sentence would appear to contradict what is asserted earlier, that the body may become sinless if the soul has chosen to associate itself with the spirit.²¹ The writer seems to be particularly concerned here with the fate of man's carnal element.

Although the emphasis is different from that of John and the threefold conception of human nature receives special prominence, the ideas here expressed by the Gnostic author are not unknown in the writings of more orthodox authors. Clement of Alexandria speaks of the soul as intermediate to body and spirit and of the salvation of the soul by the spirit (Str. IV.xiii.90.3, GCS 2, p. 288) and Origen, as noted above, writes of the soul's free will to choose between flesh

21. Ibid., p. 68.

and spirit. Both Alexandrians held a high opinion of the freedom of the human will and stressed the individual's responsibility to choose rightly. In other parts of the Apocryphal Letter of James we see this emphasis repeated (5.3-6; 7.10-11; 11.15-17) although the need for a Saviour as enlightener also appears (8.26-27, 35-36; 9.18-23; 13.32-39; 14.8-10). The Johannine verse here partly quoted is one that could readily be given a Gnostic interpretation, for the latter part of the verse could be regarded as referring to the saving gnosis imparted by Christ.

A characteristic Gnostic idea is that the spirit is destined by nature for salvation. But that the body should be at all capable of being saved is seldom met with in Gnosticism. In the Gospel of Philip, indeed, we find "The holy man is holy altogether, down to his body ... How will he not purify the body also?" (Sentence 108).²² In the Gospel of Thomas is the saying "In the days when you devoured the dead, you made it alive" (Logion 11).²³ Nevertheless, the normal Gnostic teaching was that there was no salvation for the flesh.

We may have in the Apocryphal Letter of James a document that reflects a phase of Gnosticism that had in it a greater infusion of Christian ideas than was often the case. Van Unnik, indeed, is not convinced of the Gnostic origin of the letter but thinks it is the product of "vague, unreflected Christianity" at a time when "theology

22. ET R. McL. Wilson, ed., The Gospel of Philip (London, 1962), p. 53.

23. ET A. Guillaumont, H.-Ch. Puech, G. Quispel, W. Till, Yassah Abd Al Masih, edd., The Gospel according to Thomas (Leiden, 1959), p. 7.

was still in a very fluid state."²⁴ The editors of the document, Puech and Quispel, conclude, however, that it may be taken as Gnostic.²⁵

The Gospel of Philip

The discoveries at Nag Hammadi have provided important examples of the writings of the adherents of the Gnostic sects and give evidence of their knowledge of the canonical writings. Though repudiated by the Church some of the Gnostics claimed for themselves the designation 'Christian'. The author of the Gospel of Philip refers to the time "when we became Christians."²⁶ Wilson considers that "the greater part of our New Testament was known and recognized as authoritative" by that author.²⁷ His Gospel shows considerable use of John. There is what practically amounts to a quotation of one of the sayings in the sixth chapter and there are allusions to other portions of the discourse.

Sentence 23 forms an interpretation of John vi.53. It reads:

104	26	There are some
		who fear lest they should rise
		naked. Because of this they wish to rise
		in the flesh and [they] know not that those who
	30	wear the [flesh] are a [death] which is naked.
		Those who [will rise] naked
	 not naked. 'There is no flesh
		[and blood which will] inherit the King-
105		[dom of God]. What is this which will not inner-
		it? This which we wear. But what
		is this very thing which will inherit? That which
		belongs to Jesus

24. W.C. Van Unnik, "The Origin of the Recently Discovered 'Apocryphon Jacobi'" VC 10, 1956, 456.

25. Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha, p. xxv.

26. Sentence 6 ET C.J. de Catanzaro, "The Gospel according to Philip" JTS N.S. 13, 1962, 36.

27. R. McL. Wilson, The Gospel of Philip, p. 4f.

- and his blood. Because of this he said,
 'He who does not eat my flesh and does not drink
 5 my blood has not life in him.' What
 is (this)? His flesh is the word (λόγος) and his blood
 is the Holy Spirit. He who has received these things
 has food and he has drink and clothing.
 I blame others who say
 10 that it will not rise, since those of the
 two are in (greater) error. You say
 that the flesh will not rise, but tell me
 who is he who will rise, in order that I may
 honour you. You say that the spirit is in the flesh
 15 and this light too is in the flesh. It is a
 word, that other which is in the flesh which
 you will say, without saying anything apart from the flesh.
 It is necessary to rise in this flesh as 23
 everything comes into being in it.

One of the most frequently stated beliefs in treatises on the various Gnostic systems of doctrine is the conception of the body along with the world and all things material as evil.²⁹ In accordance with that idea redemption was for the Gnostics the freeing of the spiritual element in man from its earthly prison. When they had occasion to use the term 'resurrection' (not, it may be said, one of their more common ways of describing redemption) it was a spiritual resurrection rather than a bodily one of which they spoke.³⁰ In support of this view the author has seized upon the words of Paul, "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Cor. xv.50). Paul had contrasted man's present natural (ψυχικόν) body with the

28. ET C.J. de Catanzaro, op. cit., p. 40f.

29. R. McL. Wilson, The Gnostic Problem, p. 79.

30. G. Quispel, "The Jung Codex and Its Significance" The Jung Codex, ed. F.L. Cross (London, 1955), p. 55.

spiritual (πνευματικόν) one in which believers were to be raised. The first few lines of the passage quoted show that the writer has also been pondering over Paul's words in II Corinthians v.1ff.

Gnostic thought held that Jesus, being divine, could have no direct contact with matter and consequently his body was not one of flesh but only seemed so.³¹ From this standpoint the author of Philip interprets Christ's reference to his flesh and blood as necessary for those who are to be raised to eternal life. They must receive spiritual flesh such as Jesus has. Wilson, although he speaks of the writer as "grappling, not altogether successfully" with Pauline doctrine,³² marvels that he has here reproduced it so accurately.³³ It is certainly true that the author has understood Paul better than he has John, for John has stressed the true humanity of Jesus not only here in his insistence on the reality of his flesh and blood but in other parts of the Gospel as well,³⁴ as though he wished specifically to refute a docetic christology, but it is in the light of just such a docetic view of Christ's person that the Gnostic refers to the flesh and blood as not only the food and drink of resurrected believers but their clothing also. Helmbold supports, along with Wilson, the translation 'clothing', which has been disputed, pointing to the similar combination

31. R. McL. Wilson, The Gnostic Problem, p. 134.

32. R. McL. Wilson, The Gospel of Philip, p. 83.

33. Ibid., p. 12.

34. C.K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 62;
W.F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John (London, 1943),
p. 149;
W. Temple, Readings in St. John's Gospel (First Series), (London,
1940), p. 81.

of ideas in the Gnostic Apocryphon of John and refers it to Matthew vi.25.³⁵ Puech, writing of the school of Valentinus, with which the Gospel of Philip has been considered to be connected,³⁶ says: "Valentin ne niait pas la résurrection de la chair, mais seulement l'identité du corps ressuscité avec le corps terrestre du défunt."³⁷ The teaching in the Gospel of Philip here follows that line of thought.

Wilson draws attention to the inconsistency when, at the end of this passage, the Gnostic says that it is necessary to rise in this flesh, and refers to the Letter to Rheginus where a resurrection of the flesh also seems to be taught.³⁸ The further interpretation of the flesh and blood as word and Holy Spirit are more in line with orthodox ideas. It recalls the type of expression and imagery used by Ignatius when he equates Christ's flesh and blood with faith and love (Trall. viii). In the words *λόγος* and *πνεῦμα* there may be a reference to John vi. 63. According to this Gnostic Gospel the flesh and blood of Christ give life and they are word and spirit. In the Johannine discourse Jesus' words are spirit and life.

35. A. Helmbold, "Translation Problems in the Gospel of Philip" NTS 11, 1965, 91.

36. R. McL. Wilson, The Gospel of Philip, p. 3.

37. H. Ch. Puech et G. Quispel, "Les Écrits Gnostiques du Codex Jung" VC 8, 1954, 41.

38. R. McL. Wilson, The Gospel of Philip, p. 88.

In Sentence 15 Christ is spoken of as bringing bread from heaven. Wilson says merely that the phrase 'recalls' John vi.31ff and interprets the passage as a whole to refer to the Genesis Creation story.³⁹ Ménard, on the other hand, gives the greater stress to the Johannine reference, treating the bread which Christ brings as the gnosis by which men are saved.⁴⁰ In the following sentence Truth is spoken of as sown and reaped as grain and that seems to favour an interpretation of the bread as gnosis. Ménard makes reference to John vi also when commenting on Sentence 93⁴¹ where we read that none who eat the Truth will die. Again Jesus is the one who brings such food. Wilson does not make the connection. Since the food in this case is not called bread, it seems unwarranted to make very much of any connection with John vi here, although there is admittedly a likeness of thought.

In some branches of Gnosticism the eucharist did not play the prominent role it did in the Church. R.M. Grant writes of the rejection of conventional worship by such groups.⁴² In Sentence 68 of this work we encounter the term eucharist in what appears to be a list of five sacraments, but no idea is given as to what significance such a rite had for the author. The words and ideas of John vi associated among the orthodox with sacramental teaching receive a

39. Ibid., p. 79.

40. J.E. Ménard, L'Évangile Selon Philippe (Paris, 1967), p. 135.

41. Ibid., p. 211.

42. R.M. Grant, After the New Testament, p. 178f.

modified and distinctively Gnostic interpretation in the Gospel of Philip.

The Acts of Thomas

In the Acts of Judas Thomas the Apostle, an apocryphal work describing Thomas' preaching in India, there are several descriptions of a eucharist. The order of the rite is not described in detail but the variations appear to indicate that no liturgical uniformity had been established. In one case, when the elements have been placed upon the table, Thomas addresses the bread itself in these terms:

Living Bread, the eaters of which die not!
Bread that fillest hungry souls with thy
blessing! Thou art worthy to receive the
gift and to be for the remission of sins,
that those who eat thee may not die! We
name the name of the Father over thee; we
name the name of the Son over thee; we
name the name of the Spirit over thee,
the exalted name that is hidden from all.

He then addresses his prayer to Jesus:

In thy name, Jesus, may the power of the
blessing and the thanksgiving come and
abide over this bread, that all the souls
which take of it may be renewed and
their sins may be forgiven them.

(Chapter 133)⁴³

It is most unusual to find the bread addressed in this way. The phrase "we name the name of the Son over thee" indicates that it is the bread itself and not Jesus under the title of 'Living Bread' to which

43. ET A.F.J. Klijn, The Acts of Thomas (Leiden, 1962), p. 136.

the words are spoken. It is noteworthy also that it is called living bread before the prayer asking for the power of the blessing. The fragmentary character of the description of the sacrament does not permit any conclusion as to the importance attached to this prayer. Wiles cites chapter 49 of the Acts of Thomas as an example of eucharistic prayer addressed to Jesus in popular Gnosticizing writings. As the above shows the practice occurs more than once in the work.⁴⁴ In chapter 50 there is an extended epiclesis in which, after a long descriptive address to the Spirit, the essential petition is "Come and communicate with us in this eucharist which we celebrate." Throughout the whole document the bread is given much greater prominence than the cup.

In the adjectival phrases "the eaters of which die not" and "that fillest hungry souls", we have the same ideas connected with the bread as in John vi.35, 51. Klijn indicates that, although direct quotations are few, the writer appears to be familiar with most books of the New Testament.⁴⁵ He probably used a Diatessaron.⁴⁶

The date of the work is uncertain. Klijn thinks it may have been written in the beginning of the third century.⁴⁷

44. M.F. Wiles, The Making of Christian Doctrine (Cambridge, 1967), p. 77 fn.

45. A.F.J. Klijn, op. cit. , p. 16.

46. Ibid., p. 17.

47. Ibid., p. 26.

III. EARLY ALEXANDRIAN COMMENTATORS

Clement of Alexandria

W. Den Boer has said: "Before Origen we hardly come across a definite opinion on the method of interpreting the Holy Scripture."¹ He has reference to the often quoted threefold division of exposition, literal, moral, and allegorical (De Princ. iv.168). However, though perhaps not so explicitly defined, Origen's predecessor, Clement, had certain definite principles by which he interpreted the sacred writings. Prunet points out that his practice was not that of the exegete "qui se placerait devant un livre, un chapitre ou une péricope pour les suivre du commencement à la fin et tâcher d'en exprimer toute la substance" (with the exception of his homily Quis Dives Salvetur) but rather that of the theologian who illustrates and supports a train of thought by quotation from many widely separated passages of the Bible.² It might be urged, however, that Clement's extended remarks on I Corinthians iii.2 in the Paedagogus, to which we shall be referring, should rank as an exegesis of that verse.

Clement sought, as he claimed, to interpret Scripture by Scripture (Str. vii.96.1, GCS 3, p. 68). Although he quoted copiously, he was selective, thus indicating his preference for certain parts of the Scriptures and implying that others might be passed over. As Tollinton

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1. W. Den Boer, "Hermeneutic Problems in Early Christian Literature" VC 1, 1947, 151.
 2. O. Prunet, La Morale de Clément d'Alexandrie et le Nouveau Testament (Paris, 1966), p. 197.

points out, "this constitutes a kind of exegesis."³ Clement held that the meaning taken from a passage should be in accordance with what is becoming to God (Str. vii.96.4, GCS 3, p. 68). He believed that the deeper truths of Scripture were not in its plain literal word but were to be sought in parable, symbol and allegory (Str. vi.124.6, GCS 2, p. 494), and that belief formed his almost constant principle in interpretation. He pointed to the words of the prophet in confirmation of it: "He will open his mouth in parables and will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Ps lxxviii.2 probably). Thus he understands the words of Paul: "We speak the wisdom of God hidden in a mystery" (I Cor. ii.7). Even Jesus himself supplied authority for this principle of concealment by his method of teaching in parables and later interpreting them in private to his disciples to whom he said: "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. xiii.11; Str. v.80.4.7, GCS 2, p. 379).

In the writings of the Alexandrians it is clear that scriptural exegesis was by no means an isolated preoccupation of the few, but that they wrote in a milieu in which there was intense interest and activity in that field. Origen's citations and criticisms of the interpretations of other men give some indication of the variety of the contemporary exegesis and Clement refers to what he calls the apostolic and ecclesiastic way of interpreting Scripture (Str. vii.104.1, GCS 3, p. 73) and the deviations from it that were to be found among the heterodox. Although widely used, the method of allegorical interpretation favoured by both these writers did not go without challenge from literalists nor from

3. R.B. Tollinton, Clement of Alexandria, Vol. II (London, 1914), p. 210.

others, like the Jews and Gnostics, who, nevertheless, both frequently employed it themselves.

Both Clement and Origen prefer an allegorical or symbolic exegesis in dealing with the bread of life discourse and in Clement's work we discern a definite interpretation of this part of John's Gospel. In the first book of the Paedagogus he seeks to explain the metaphor by which Scripture speaks of Christians sometimes as men in comparison with their previous state as children under the law (Gal. iv.1-5; I Cor. xiii.11) but at other times as infants (Lk x.21). Having stated that the believer, baptized and illuminated, is as a son made perfect, he finds a difficulty in Paul's words, "I have fed you with milk as children in Christ, not with meat, for you were not able, nor are you yet able" (I Cor. iiii.2), in which the faith of the newly converted seems to be disparaged as childish and imperfect. The difficulty is not made any the less when he cites the verse "I will bring you into that good land which flows with milk and honey" (Ex. iii.8), for he regards these words as describing the rest of the perfect, yet their state is characterized by the food of infants (Paed. i.25 seq., GCS i, p. 104f).

In his exposition Clement says the Word is allegorically represented as milk and continues:

'Wherefore also I have given you milk to drink' he says, meaning I have instilled into you the knowledge which, from instruction, nourishes up to eternal life. But the expression 'I have given you to drink' is the symbol of perfect appropriation. For those who are full-grown are said to drink, babes to suck. 'For my blood,' says the Lord, 'is true drink.' In saying, therefore, 'I have given you milk to drink' has he not indicated the knowledge of the truth, the perfect gladness in the Word, who is the milk?

(Paed. i.36.4.5, GCS i, p.111)

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He goes on with his exposition of Paul, making no immediate comment on this saying of Jesus (Jn vi.55) but allowing the reader to draw his own conclusion as to its relevance here. Somewhat farther on, however, having said that the milk and the meat of which Paul speaks are to be regarded as really the same in substance, representing the gospel and instruction, he returns to this reference, saying:

Elsewhere the Lord, in the Gospel according to John, brought this out by symbols, when he said: 'Eat my flesh and drink my blood' indicating allegorically the eatable and drinkable properties of faith and the promise, by means of which the Church, like a human being consisting of many members, is refreshed and grows, is welded together and compacted of both, - of faith, which is the body, and of hope, which is the soul; as also the Lord of flesh and blood.

(Paed. i.38.2, GCS 1, p. 112f)

Clement has clearly taken the words of Jesus to refer to instruction by means of which Christians are built up in expectant faith.

There follows a long passage on human physiology which purports to show that milk and blood are in essence the same thing. Milk is likened to manna, the celestial food of the Hebrews in the wilderness, a reference perhaps suggested to Clement by an earlier verse in the sixth chapter of John (vs 31). He then draws an ecstatic picture of the Church as a mother nourishing her children on the milk of the Word with a further reference to the partaking of Christ's offered flesh and blood.

A slightly different interpretation is suggested for those who are not inclined to understand the passage in that way. The flesh is allegorized as the Holy Spirit and the blood as the Word which in the incarnation were united and feed believers with the milk of the Father (Paed. i.43.2.3, GCS 1, p. 115f). Batiffol says that we have proof

throughout this part of the Paedagogus that Clement does not interpret John vi eucharistically.⁴ However, while still preserving the idea of this nourishment as instruction, Clement shows that he has not overlooked the eucharistic relevance of Christ's discourse, for he says:

As soon as we are regenerated, we are honoured
by receiving the good news of the hope of rest,
even the Jerusalem above, in which it is written
that the milk and honey fall in showers, receiving
through what is material the pledge of the sacred
food.

(Paed. i.45.1, GCS 1, p. 116)

He affirms "to us infants who drink the milk of the Word of the heavens, Christ himself is food," and proceeds to quote verses 32b, 33 and 51c of John vi. He discerns two further meanings in the symbolism of the bread. The rising of the bread as it is baked is seen as a reminder of the resurrection, whereas the bread dipped in the mixture of wine and water, which, he says, absorbs the wine only, indicates that Christ similarly separates the spiritual among men from their carnal appetites (Paed. i.46.3, 47.1, GCS 1, p. 117f). The Word, he declares, is allegorized in many ways, as meat, flesh, food, bread, blood and milk (Paed. i.47.2, GCS 1, p. 118). "As man's regeneration was spiritual, so his food also was spiritual" (Paed. i.49.3, GCS 1, p. 119). Throughout this long exegesis of the Pauline use of 'milk' and 'meat' the discourse of Jesus on the bread of life is in the back of Clement's mind and keeps breaking into his train of thought to reveal the way in which the symbolism of the eucharist might serve his preoccupation with the instruction of believers.

In the Stromateis, Book v, Clement again interprets the milk and meat of which Paul writes, this time calling the milk catechetical instruction and the meat the mystic contemplation.

4. P. Batiffol, L'Eucharistie (Paris, 1913), p. 255 fn 1.

For this is the flesh and the blood of the Word,
that is, the comprehension of the divine power
and essence. 'Taste and see that the Lord is
Christ' it is said. For so he imparts himself
to those who partake of such food in a more
spiritual manner ... The knowledge of the divine
essence is the meat and drink of the Word.

(Str. v.66.2.3, GCS 2, p. 370)

Batiffol says of this last quotation that Clement is not thinking here of the eucharist at all but only of *γνώσις*.⁵ However, he omits the words "Taste and see ... spiritual manner" from the quotation and these add weight to the contention that Clement is thinking of both. There is a curious mingling in Clement's thought of the language of the eucharist with that of the Church's teaching ministry, as though they amounted to practically the same thing. Not without some justice has one author said of him, "He has at times a preference for mist."⁶ Quoting the verse (Jn vi. 27) which contrasts the meat which perishes with that which endures, Clement says, "Nourishment is received both by bread and by words" (Str. i.7.2, GCS 2, p. 6). He shows little interest in the sacramental aspect of the eucharist and appears never to apply a strictly sacramental interpretation to the words from the discourse in John vi when he has occasion to quote from it.

Apart from any reference to this portion of John's Gospel, when Clement speaks of the eucharist the ideas of instruction and knowledge are seldom absent.

5. Ibid., p. 254. The passage from the Paedagogus quoted above he thinks also refers to gnosis only.

6. C. Hebert, The Lord's Supper: Uninspired Teaching Vol. I (London, 1879), p. 61.

Wherefore the Saviour, taking the bread, first spoke and blessed. Then breaking the bread, he presented it that we might eat it according to reason, and that knowing the Scriptures we might walk obediently.

(Str. i.46.1, GCS 2, p. 30)

It is I who nurture you, giving you myself as bread (and he who has tasted of it no longer makes trial of death) and granting you daily the drink of immortality. I am a teacher of heavenly lessons.

(Quis Dives 23.4, GCS 3, p. 175)

Yet we cannot say that the sacramental understanding of the eucharist was entirely absent from his thought. He never suggests that it is an unnecessary part of the Christian life. He does not avoid such expressions as "the drink of immortality" (cf Jn vi.54) but continually stresses the need for knowledge of and obedience to Christ's teaching. Nor can we say that such an expression in any way indicates a gross or superstitious conception of the sacrament. In his homily on the Rich Man he said:

Salvation does not depend on external things ... but it depends on the excellence of the soul, on faith and hope and love, and brotherly affection and knowledge and meekness and humility and truth of which qualities salvation is the reward.

(Quis Dives 18.1, GCS 3, p. 171)

He was not speaking of the eucharist but of the rich man's possessions. Nevertheless, with his constant stress on instruction and a life adorned by such Christ-like qualities, it appears most credible that he would not regard salvation as depending on the material elements in the eucharist either. But one cannot pin him down for, when he writes specifically of the sacramental elements, his language is an inextricable union of the realistic and the spiritual. Witness the following:

The blood of the Lord is twofold. The one is fleshly by which we have been redeemed from corruption; the other is spiritual, by which we have been anointed. To drink the blood of Jesus is to share in the incorruption of the Lord. The Spirit is the force of the Word, as the blood is of the flesh. Analogously, therefore, the wine is mingled with water and the Spirit with man. The mixture furnishes a banquet for faith, the Spirit conducts to immortality. The mixture of both - of that which is drunk and the Word - is called Eucharist, a grace renowned and fair. Those who, according to faith, participate in it are sanctified in body and soul, the will of the Father mingling in mystical fashion the divine mixture - the man - with the Spirit and the Word.

(Paed. ii.19.4 - 20.1, GCS 1, p. 167f)

In such a passage commentators have seen Clement as supporting on the one hand a very realist attitude to the divine presence in the sacrament and on the other a completely spiritual view of it. Batiffol says Clement is not one "qui ne croirait qu'à une présence en figure ... L'eucharistie est une quasi-incarnation."⁷ Hort finds all Clement's references to the eucharist characterized by the principle enunciated in John vi.63. He writes:

In the eucharist itself, the actual bread and wine are nothing; the Body and Blood of Christ are no material body and blood, liable to accidents, such as were anxiously deprecated by some of his contemporaries. 8

One cannot feel quite so certain as Hort on the matter. Nevertheless, Clement does play down the realist conception by using the language of the eucharist for the believer's progress in the

7. P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 260f.

8. F. J. A. Hort, Clement of Alexandria Miscellanies Book VII (London, 1902), p. 382f.

knowledge of divine things and by allegorizing the flesh and blood as Spirit, faith, hope.

This habit is a product of Clement's Gnostic tendencies. Over against the Gnostic heresies of the time he placed an orthodox gnosis. Without denying the saving benefits that come to the simple believer at the time of baptism, for he calls him already perfect (*supra* p.51), he taught that there were further higher rewards awaiting him who went on to add knowledge (*γνῶσις*) to his simple faith. Πλέον δέ ἐστι τοῦ πιστεῦσαι τὸ γνῶναι (*Str.* vi.109.2, *GCS* 2, p. 486).

It was only in repudiation of the claims of heretical sects to a special gnosis and their disparagement of the faith of simple Christians that he had represented it as already complete, for he clearly distinguishes the man of simple faith from the true Gnostic. "Those who have merely tasted the Scriptures are believers; while those who, having advanced further and become correct expounders of the truth, are Gnostics" (*Str.* vii.95.9, *GCS* 3, p. 68). "Knowledge which is the perfection of faith goes beyond catechetical instruction" (*Str.* vi.165.1, *GCS* 2, p. 517). Though potentially all Christians might attain this higher understanding, in practice it was limited by the spiritual capacity and the choice of the believer.

Clement defined faith as "a comprehensive knowledge of the essentials" and gnosis as "the strong and sure demonstration of what is received by faith, built upon faith by the Lord's teaching, conveying (the soul) on to infallibility, science and comprehension" (*Str.* vii.57.3, *GCS* 3, p. 42). Gnosis cannot be attained without faith (*Str.* ii.31.3, *GCS* 2, p. 129) but is not just another term for what is to be found in the Scriptures, for "gnosis itself is that which has descended by trans-

mission to a few, having been imparted unwritten by the apostles" (Str. vi.61.3, GCS 2, p. 462).

André Méhat has shown that gnosis among its varied aspects included especially a certain interpretation of the Scriptures, particularly of the Old Testament,⁹ adducing such passages as the following: "Prophecy is foreknowledge and knowledge the understanding of prophecy, being the knowledge of those things known before by the Lord who reveals all things" (Str. ii.54.1, GCS 2, p. 142); "For the law is living if it is spiritual and understood gnostically" (Str. iii.83.5, GCS 2, p. 234); and with reference to the vision of Hermas,

Wherefore also the figurative expression is employed 'reading according to the letter'; while we understand that the gnostic unfolding of the Scriptures, when faith has already reached an advanced state, is likened to 'reading according to the syllables'.
(Str. vi.131.3, GCS 2, p. 498)

Méhat is emphatic in asserting that it was a secret tradition although he cites no passage from Clement that specifically says so. We are to infer it from the fact that it has been transmitted only to the few and from Clement's insistence in many places that the meaning of Scripture is veiled and hidden in symbol and allegory. It would seem in fact that the allegorical method was probably the Gnostic way.

Méhat has well said of Clement that "de tous les aspects du Logos, c'est celui d'éducateur et de maître de doctrine qu'il préfère"¹⁰ and so one might say it is not surprising that with such a predisposition

9. A. Méhat, Étude sur les 'Stromates' de Clément d'Alexandrie (Paris, 1966), p. 428.

10. Ibid., p. 530.

Clement has interpreted the bread of life in a pedagogic sense. As stated already, the eucharistic connotations of the discourse have not escaped him, but there is no incompatibility in thus associating two interpretations with a single scriptural passage. Alternative allegorical interpretations are often met with in Clement's writings. However, for Clement, "le rite n'est que la manifestation extérieure d'une réalité intérieure."¹¹ Just as baptism signified for him most appropriately 'illumination', (*Paed.* i.25.1, 26.1, *GCS* 1, p. 104f) so the eucharist symbolized progress in knowledge of the Truth. Participation in it was mystic contemplation, the comprehension of the divine power and essence (*Str.* v.66.2, *GCS* 2, p. 370). He clearly expressed what was for him of cardinal worth when he wrote:

Could we, then, suppose anyone proposing to the Gnostic whether he would choose the knowledge of God or everlasting salvation; and if these, which are entirely identical, were separable, he would without the least hesitation choose the knowledge of God, deeming that property of faith, which from love ascends to knowledge, desirable for its own sake.

(*Str.* iv.136.5, *GCS* 2, p. 308)

It is little wonder then if this set of mind coloured his understanding of the central act of the Church's worship and became the basis of his interpretation of Jesus' teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

Origen

Origen continues and develops the allegorical exegesis that we met in Clement. R. M. Grant calls him "the boldest allegorizer of the ancient Church."¹² Origen says: "The Scriptures were composed

11. *Ibid.*, p. 533.

12. R. M. Grant, *The Letter and the Spirit* (London, 1957), p. 101.

through the Spirit of God and they have not only that meaning which is obvious but also another which is hidden from the majority of readers" (De Princ. I praef. 8, GCS 5, p. 14). He was not, however, simply following a traditional method of interpretation but, as L  uchli has so well demonstrated,¹³ had seen allegory as the way he could maintain the unity of the divine truth witnessed to in the four gospels in the face of the discrepancies to be found between the synoptics and the Johannine Gospel. His justification for his type of exegesis is set forth in the tenth book of his Commentary on John in the course of his discussion of the cleansing of the temple. Since the events recorded in the Fourth Gospel could not be harmonized with the order of events presented in the other three accounts, Origen realized he would have to reject one as historically false in favour of the other or, denying the historicity of both, find by allegorizing them "the realm above history, above the literal text, in which the unity exists"¹⁴ (Com. in Joh. X.3, GCS 4, p. 173). However, in thus developing an apologetic exegesis against pagan ridicule of the self contradictions of the Gospels, he was not willing to empty Scripture altogether of true history for that would have been to open the door to the Gnostic docetic christology. To prevent that he proposed the theory that historical and unhistorical are woven together by the writer in accordance with the teaching he wished to impart. He asserts: "Occasionally the records taken in a literal sense are not true, but actually absurd or impossible" (De Princ. IV.3.4, GCS 5, p. 328). But where such absurdities or discrepancies were found, "the spiritual truth was often preserved, as

13. S. L  uchli, "The Polarity of the Gospels in the Exegesis of Origen" CH 21, 1952, 215-224.

14. Ibid., p. 219.

one might say, in the material falsehood" (Com. in Joh. X.5, GCS 4, p. 175). In the Scriptures themselves Origen found the necessity for a spiritual interpretation. Grant also sees Origen's method as a defense against critics of the Scriptures¹⁵ and considers his subjection of the New Testament to allegorization as his "most important advance over Clement's work" for, he says, Clement's allegorical exegesis was confined to the Old Testament except for occasional symbolic interpretation.¹⁶ We have examined Clement's work on John vi which seems to indicate a greater use of allegory for the New Testament than Grant's statement would suggest. Origen's use of allegory, nevertheless, exceeds that of Clement. Fairweather says the allegorical method "meant licence to father his own speculations upon a sacred text which was venerated as the depository of all truth."¹⁷ It must not be thought that Origen knowingly twisted the Scriptures to a meaning he knew they did not bear for he believed he was discovering the real intention of the writer who had intended what he wrote to have spiritual meanings beyond its literal word. That scholars today do not hold such a view of Scripture need cast no shadow on Origen's exegetical honesty.

Like Clement Origen also found justification for allegorical exegesis in the example of Paul. Citing Paul's remarks to the Corinthians about the baptism of the Israelites in the cloud and in the sea and their drinking of the spiritual rock which he identified with Christ, Origen declares: "If I should follow another method than Paul, I consider that

15. R. M. Grant, The Letter and the Spirit, p. 98f.

16. Ibid., p. 89.

17. W. Fairweather, Origen and Greek Patristic Theology (Edinburgh, 1901), p. 78.

I should be giving my hand to the enemies of Christ" (Hom. in Ex. V.1, GCS 6, p. 184). But, as Hanson remarks, Origen, unlike Clement, did not derive his esoteric doctrine from independent unwritten tradition but from the Scriptures themselves.¹⁸

In view of Origen's conception of Scripture it is to be expected that he would give a spiritual interpretation to the discourse on the bread of life and that expectation is not disappointed. Unfortunately, the portion of his commentary on John that would have dealt thoroughly with the sixth chapter has not been preserved. There are, nevertheless, a considerable number of passages scattered throughout his works that make reference to the words of Jesus in that chapter and reveal his understanding of them.

They are employed on one occasion as a means of opposing the literal interpretation of Scripture. Origen has been speaking of the Jewish Passover and poses the question how the sheep which was the victim contains an image of Christ. Then, quoting the words of John vi. 53-56, he says: "the flesh thus spoken of is that of the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world," and then proceeds to allegorize the instructions given by Moses for the first Passover, declaring:

Of the flesh of this Lamb it is necessary that we should eat in the time of this world, which is night, and the flesh is to be roast with fire, and eaten with unleavened bread, for the Word of God is not flesh and flesh only. He says, in fact, himself, 'I am the Bread of life' ... We eat the flesh of the Lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread when we repent of our sins and grieve with the sorrow which is according to God, a repentance which operates

18. R. P. C. Hanson, Origen's Doctrine of Tradition (London, 1954), p. 83.

for our salvation and is not to be repented of, or when on account of our trials we turn to the speculations which are found to be those of truth and are nourished by them. We are not, however, to eat of the flesh of the Lamb raw, as those do who are slaves of the letter, like irrational animals, and those who are enraged at truly reasonable men, because they desire to understand spiritual things; truly they share the nature of savage beasts. But we must strive to convert the rawness of Scripture into well cooked food.

(Com. in Joh. X.17, GCS 4, p. 187f)

And after further on the same theme he ends with these words:

For we are not to suppose that historical things are types of historical things and material things of material, but that material things are typical of spiritual things and historical things of intellectual.

(Com. in Joh. X.17, GCS 4, p. 189)

In the context of the discourse in John the bread of life is specifically related to the manna, the food of the Israelites in the wilderness, but no similar connection is made between the flesh of Jesus and the Passover lamb. Origen makes the link, however, quoting Paul, "Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us" (Com. in Joh. X.17, GCS 4, p. 186). But he makes nothing here of the idea of sacrifice. Instead he seizes upon the rather prosaic detail of the need for cooking meat before eating it to stress his favourite principle that Scripture cannot be taken at its face value. That is a theme of which he never tires.

Like Clement Origen interprets the eating of the flesh of Christ as assimilation of his teaching. In the twenty-third homily on the Book of Numbers he is again speaking of the Jewish feasts and says:

The Jews with carnal thoughts eat the flesh of the lamb but we eat the flesh of the Word of God for he has said, 'If you do not eat my flesh, you will not have life in you.' The words which we speak at this time are the flesh of the Word

of God insofar as we do not offer herbs for the weak or milk for babes. If our words are perfect, strong and courageous we are giving you the flesh of the Word of God to eat ... He who with perfect understanding and a purified heart can feed upon it truly offers the paschal sacrifice and celebrates the feast with God and his angels.

(Hom. in Num. XXIII.6, GCS 7, p. 218)

With reference to manna he comments:

The Saviour says, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' This bread therefore the angels indeed used to eat but now men also eat it. But to eat is in this place to know. But the mind eats that which it knows and does not eat that which it does not know.

(Com. in Ps. LXXVII(78).25, PG XII.1542)

Clement had taken Paul's metaphor of milk for babes and meat for the mature believer to indicate catechetical instruction as distinguished from mystic contemplation (Str. v.66). Origen makes a somewhat similar distinction between the bread and the wine. He begins by quoting the verse "Wine makes glad the heart of man" (Ps civ.15) and says:

For if the heart be the intellectual part and what rejoices it is the Word, most pleasant of all to drink, which takes us off human things, makes us feel ourselves inspired, and intoxicates us with an intoxication which is not irrational but divine ... then it is very clear how he who brings wine thus to rejoice the heart of man is the true vine.

After a further expansion of the figure of the vine he continues:

It is somewhat difficult to show the difference between the vine and bread, for he says not only that he is the vine but that he is the bread of life. May it be that as bread nourishes and makes strong and is said to strengthen the heart of man but wine, on the contrary, pleases and rejoices and melts him, so ethical studies, bringing life to him who learns them and reduces them to practice, are the bread of life, but cannot properly be called the fruit of the vine, while secret and mystical speculations, rejoicing the heart and causing those to feel inspired

who take them in, delighting in the Lord,
and who desire not only to be nourished but
to be made happy, are called the juice of
the true vine because they flow from it.

(Com. in Joh. I.30, GCS 4, p. 37)

Perhaps the following may be regarded as an instance of the mystic speculations which Origen found so exhilarating. In the life to come he envisages a continuation of the Christian's progress in wisdom and knowledge of divine things under the figure of a banquet. The bread of life is our food not only here but hereafter.

Those, however, who receive the representations of Scripture according to the understanding of the apostles entertain the hope that the saints will eat indeed but that it will be the bread of life which may nourish the soul with the food of truth and wisdom, and enlighten the mind and cause it to drink from the cup of divine wisdom, according to the declaration of holy Scripture: 'Wisdom has prepared her table, she has killed her beasts, she has mingled her wine in her cup, and she cries with a loud voice, Come to me, eat the bread which I have prepared for you, and drink the wine which I have mingled' (Prov. ix.1-5) ... although an individual may depart from this life less perfectly instructed, but has done works that are approved, he will be capable of receiving instruction in that Jerusalem, the city of the saints, that is he will be educated and moulded and made a living stone ... and will there come to a truer and clearer knowledge of that which has been already predicted, that men shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God.

(De Princ. II.11.3, GCS 5, p. 186)

In his treatise On Prayer, when expounding the petition for bread in the Lord's Prayer, Origen quotes the greater part of Jesus' teaching on the bread of life. He maintains that the petition is not for material bread, as some suppose, but for heavenly bread, that is, for divine truth. He refers to a saying which he has used earlier as his general principle for all prayer, "Ask for the great things and

the little things will be added to you" (De Ora. II.2, GCS 2, p. 299).

These words, though not found in Scripture, he regards as a saying of the Lord. They are so used by Clement of Alexandria (Str. i.158.2, GCS 2, p. 100) and Eusebius (In Ps. 16.2, PG XXIII.160) and have been considered by some modern scholars to be authentic.¹⁹ Having quoted John vi.26-29, 32-33 with some minor omissions, Origen continues:

Now the true bread is that which nourishes the true man who has been made in the image of God and he who is nourished with it becomes also after the likeness of the Creator. But what is more nourishing to the soul than the Word, and what is more precious to the mind of him who makes room for it than the Wisdom of God?
(De Ora. xxvii.2, GCS 2, p. 364)

To counter those who would interpret the petition in material terms, Origen notes that Jesus sometimes speaks of the bread as something other than himself, but later says that he himself is the bread. Then citing the words of Jesus regarding his flesh and blood (Jn vi.51, 53-57), Origen remarks:

This is the true meat, the flesh of Christ, which being the Word has become flesh, as it is said, 'the Word became flesh.' When we ate and drank him he also dwelt among us. But whenever he is distributed then is fulfilled 'We beheld his glory.'
(De Ora. xxvii.4, GCS 2, p. 365)

The word 'distributed' (ἀναδιδῶται) is probably a reminiscence of John vi.11 (διέδωκεν) and is suggestive of the distribution in the eucharistic celebration. References to the eucharist are not frequent in Origen's expositions of this Johannine passage but there are a few occasions, as we shall see, when the eucharist is associated with it in

^E
19. J. R. L. Oulton & H. Chadwick, Alexandrian Christianity (London, 1954), p. 332.

his thought. If in this case such a thought is present, it is quickly 'spiritualized', for in the discussion of the term ἐπιούσιος which follows, we read:

The bodily bread which is distributed for the body of him who is nourished thereby passes into his substance (οὐσίαν). Similarly the living bread which has come down out of heaven being distributed for the mind and the soul imparts a share of its peculiar power to him who has willingly accepted the nourishment that comes from it: and thus the bread that we ask for will be ἐπιούσιος.

(De Ora. xxvii.9, GCS 2, p. 369)

One passage, which certainly puts the interpretation of living bread entirely in the intellectual and ethical realm, contrasts the living bread with 'dead bread'. No possible connection with the eucharist can be imagined here for there is no rite for which the dead bread could stand unless it were the ceremonies of some heretical or pagan sect. The whole tenor of the passage, however, is against such an understanding. Origen is inquiring into the meaning of the phrase 'tasting of death' (Mt xvi.28) and has referred to Jesus' words, 'I am the Life' (Jn xiv.6).

As, therefore, the Life is also the living bread which came down from heaven and gave life to the world, so his enemy death is dead bread. Now every rational soul is fed either on living bread or dead bread, by the opinions good or bad which it receives. As then in the case of more common foods it is the practice at one time only to taste them and at another to eat of them more largely, so also in the case of these loaves, one eats insufficiently only tasting them, but another is satiated, he that is good or is on the way to being good with the living bread that came down from heaven, but he that is wicked with the dead bread which is death; and some perhaps sparingly, and sinning a little, only taste of death; but those who have attained to virtue do not even taste of it but are always fed on the living bread.

(Com. in Matt. xii.33, GCS 10, p.144f)

It will be seen that the allegorization of this saying of Jesus concerning those who will not taste of death until they see the coming of the Son of man wards off the question of the non-fulfilment of the prophecy if taken in a literal sense. It is an example of the use of the allegorical method to overcome the embarrassments Origen so plainly saw to be involved in a literal and historical approach.

Origen appears to make a direct connection between the eucharist and the Johannine discourse more frequently in his homilies than in his other works. The following reveals that he could understand the passage to speak either of the sacrament or of teaching. In Numbers xxiii.24 the people are likened to a lion of whom it is said, "He shall not sleep until he devours the prey and drinks the blood of the wounded." Origen, repudiating with horror a literal interpretation and taking refuge in the "sweetness of the allegorical sense," comments:

Let them tell us therefore, what people is this which practises the drinking of blood. When the Jewish followers of the Lord heard such words in the Gospel they were offended and said, 'Who can eat flesh and drink blood?' But the Christian people, the faithful people, hears this and eagerly welcomes it, and follows him who says, 'Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have life in yourselves. For my flesh is really food and my blood is really drink.' And to be sure, he who said this was wounded for men for 'he was wounded for our sins' as Isaiah says. Now we are said to drink the blood of Christ not only in the way of sacraments, but also when we receive his words, in which life consists; as he himself says, 'The words that I have spoken are spirit and life.' Therefore, he is the wounded whose blood we drink, that is to say, we receive the words of his teaching.

(Hom. in Num. xvi.9, GCS 7, p. 151)

In one of the homilies on Exodus Origen speaks with approval of the exceeding reverence, almost amounting to superstition, paid by the

faithful to the eucharistic elements but characteristically he uses it to inculcate the importance of hearing and heeding the word of preaching. His text is "Each one therefore as he has conceived in his heart" (Ex. xxxv.5, LXX).

Ask yourselves if you are conceiving or taking in, and if you are retaining, lest what is said should flow away and perish ... You who are wont to take part in the divine mysteries know how carefully and reverently you guard the body of the Lord when you receive it, lest the least crumb of it should fall to the ground, lest anything should be lost of the hallowed gift. For you regard, and rightly regard, yourselves as culpable if any part should fall to the ground through your carelessness. When you show, and rightly show, such care in guarding his body can you suppose it less blameworthy to neglect the word of God than his body?

(Hom. in Ex. xiii.3, GCS 6, p. 274)

In the Contra Celsum Origen makes reference to how Christians regard the bread of the eucharist and its effect, a passage cited by those who wish to argue for Origen's orthodoxy with respect to the eucharist.²⁰

We give thanks to the Creator of all and along with thanksgiving and prayer for the blessings we have received, we also eat the bread presented to us; and this bread becomes by prayer a sacred body which sanctifies those who sincerely partake of it.

(Contra Celsum VIII.33, GCS 2, p. 249)

The last two passages appear to indicate a more materialistic attitude to the eucharistic body than we have yet discovered. In contrast to them we must consider an important passage for Origen's understanding of the bread of the eucharist. It is one in which he comments on Christ's saying concerning what defiles a man (Mt. xv.11).

20. P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 278.

He says, "What is called the bread of the Lord may be thought by the simpler disciples to sanctify" and in contrast to this presents his own opinion in these words:

The saying is, I think, not to be despised, and on this account demands of clear exposition, which seems to me to be thus: as it is not the meat but the conscience of him who eats with doubt which defiles him that eats, for 'he that doubts is condemned if he eat, because he eats not of faith', and as nothing is pure to him who is defiled and unbelieving, not in itself, but because of his defilement and unbelief, so that which is sanctified through the word of God and prayer does not, in its own nature, sanctify him who uses it, for, if this were so, it would sanctify even him who eats unworthily of the bread of the Lord, and no one on account of this food would become weak or sickly or asleep ... In the case of the bread of the Lord accordingly, there is advantage to him who uses it, when with undefiled mind and pure conscience he partakes of the bread. So neither by not eating, I mean by the very fact that we do not eat of the bread which has been sanctified by the word of God and prayer, are we deprived of any good thing; for the cause of our lacking is wickedness and sins, and the cause of our abounding is righteousness and right actions. (cf I Cor. viii.8) ... The food which has been sanctified ... in respect of its material nature, goes into the belly and is discharged into the drain, but in respect of the prayer which comes upon it, according to the proportion of faith, becomes a Benefit and is the cause of clear vision to the mind that looks to what is beneficial. It is not the material bread but the word that is said over it which is of advantage to him who eats it not unworthily of the Lord. These things indeed are said of the typical and symbolical body. But many things might be said about the Word himself who became flesh and true meat of which he that eats shall assuredly live forever, no worthless person being able to eat it for if it were possible for one who continues worthless to eat of him who became flesh, who was the Word and the living bread, it would not have been written that every one who eats this bread shall live forever.

(Com. in Matt. XI.14, GCS 10, p. 57f)

It is unlikely that Origen would have expressed himself thus if the contrary opinion held by the 'simpler disciples' had not been fairly prevalent, perhaps **gaining ground**. Again and again he sets in opposition the capacity and comprehension of the mass of simple believers and the deeper penetration of the truly spiritual man. Unlike Clement he does not use the term *γνωστικός* for the Christian of more advanced perception, in all probability because of its use by those he regarded as heretical.²¹ To the uninstructed and negligent it was, he believed, not wise to reveal the more profound doctrines. He tells of the man who, having found the treasure hidden in the field, hid it again (Mt xiii.44) "thinking that it is not without danger to reveal to everybody the secret meanings of the Scriptures" (Com. in Matt. X.6, GCS 10, p.6). In one of the homilies he has occasion to say:

I know not whether it is suitable to unveil so profound a mystery and offer it to the multitudes, those multitudes who come but seldom to hear the word of God and go immediately away and do not stay longer in meditation on God's Word. However, for those who are eager and able to listen and to take in the spiritual sense, we will say a few more words on this vast subject.
(Hom. In Num. XIII.7, GCS 7, p. 116)

In another discourse concerning the inheritance of Zalphaat, an Israelite who had left no sons as heirs but daughters only (Num. xxvii.1-4), Origen gives the meaning of the Hebrew name as 'a shadow in his mouth' and from that draws the following interpretation:

If anyone has the shadow of the Law in his mouth and not the very image of reality, that man because he can understand nothing spiritual, nothing profound, but has only

21. H. Crouzel, Origène et la "Connaissance Mystique" (Toulouse, 1961) p. 17.

the shadow of the Law in his mouth cannot bring forth living and spiritual thoughts but is able to produce deeds and actions which are the kinds of service of the more simple believer. And thus the clemency of God is shown in that the innocent also, although they are deficient in understanding but nevertheless have good works, are not excluded from the inheritance of the saints.

(Hom. in Num. XXII.1, GCS 7, p.205)

Origen has much to say about the adaptation of Christian teaching to the capacities of the hearers, milk for babes, meat for the more advanced. In a passage from one of the homilies on Leviticus Origen very strangely misapplies Paul's words in his first letter to Corinth in the interests of this same distinction between the simple and the perfect (I Cor. ii.2,6).

When Paul was in the assembly of the perfect as if standing in the holy of holies and clothed with the garment of perfection, he would say, 'We speak wisdom among them that are perfect' ... but after that as if going out to the people, he changes his garment and puts on another far inferior. And what does he say? 'I have determined, he says, to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.'

(Hom. in Lev. IV.6, GCS 6, p. 324)

On this passage Crouzel rightly comments: "Paul ne veut pas s'adapter à la faiblesse des auditeurs, mais plutôt faire scandale devant la sagesse humaine."²²

Just as with Origen's spiritual teaching and interpretation, so with the sacraments the simple were not able to understand their full significance. Indeed, the need for sacraments seems in one passage to be connected with the deficient penetration of the mass of Christians. Origen says:

22. Ibid., p. 175.

The majority of those who are accounted believers are not of this advanced class; but from being either unable or unwilling to keep every day in this manner, they require some sensible memorials (παραδείγματα) to prevent spiritual things from passing altogether away from their minds.

(Contra Celsum VIII.23, GCS 2, p. 240)

He has been speaking of the perfect Christian (τέλειος) who is always keeping the feast, eating of the flesh of the Word, because he is always in thought, word and deed serving his Lord. Bigg says that Origen "held that the mass of men will necessarily accept the symbol for the idea, will, that is, be more or less superstitious."²³ Daniélou indeed concludes: "Le culte visible et les sacrements semblent nécessaires seulement pour les simples."²⁴ A remark in Origen's Johannine commentary, to which Daniélou draws attention,²⁵ suggests that the perfect really only take part in the visible rite for the sake of their weaker brethren.

But perhaps it is given, and reasonably also, to the true worshipper in the spirit and in truth to observe in his worship certain symbolic acts (τυπικά τινα) so that having freed those enslaved to the figure by way of accommodation (οἰκονομικώτατα) he might lead them to the truth of the figures (τύπων) ... It ought to be observed that the true worshippers not only in the future but also in the present worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

(Com. in Joh. XIII.18, GCS 4, p. 242)

Perhaps Origen here implies that the sacrament has a teaching function and for him that would by no means be the least important of its aspects. It may be, however, that he means that the true worship in spirit and in truth is worship that feels no need of sacraments.

23. C. Bigg, The Christian Platonists of Alexandria (Oxford, 1913) p. 184.

24. J. Daniélou, Origène (Paris, 1948), p. 77.

25. Ibid., p. 52.

Batiffol insists on the orthodoxy of Origen's eucharistic doctrine. Whenever he discusses a passage that interprets the eating of the flesh and blood as taking in Christ's teaching he maintains that the words 'flesh' and 'blood' have been emptied of any eucharistic significance,²⁶ and therefore have no bearing on his eucharistic doctrine. Origen, he says, is using the terms simply as figures to represent teaching. When Origen speaks directly of the eucharist, however, Batiffol says he does not allegorize. He discusses the passage in the Commentary on Matthew XI.14 (supra p.70) and finds that Origen distinguishes two elements in the sanctified bread, the material and that which sanctifies. He says the determination of the latter is unfortunately very confused. Again he admits that Origen speaks "en termes singulièrement obscurs"²⁷ when he writes that the sanctified food causes the clear vision of the mind that looks to what is beneficial. This means, he says, that the bread, because it is sanctified, is for the mind of the faithful the body of Christ. Origen, he asserts, adds a final obscurity. It is not the material of the bread but the prayer pronounced over it which is useful. He interprets these words thus: the eucharist, i.e., the sanctified bread, i.e., the Body of Christ is what is useful, not the bread by itself. Batiffol concludes by saying, "On pourra lui reprocher notamment d'être trop peu explicite sur ce qui constitue le corps sacramentel du Christ."²⁸

26. P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 269.

27. Ibid., p. 278.

28. Ibid., p. 280.

This interpretation would appear to be much closer to the understanding of the simpler disciples whose opinion needs correction than to that of Origen himself. Origen's words do not seem particularly obscure if one is not trying to find in them a pre-conceived idea.

Although the more simple are with difficulty led to appreciate the deeper meanings of Scripture, Origen in his homilies, addressed to just such less discerning Christians, never fails to point out to them the poverty of too literal an interpretation and to set before them the more spiritual, allegorical sense.²⁹ To expect him to be content with less when he unfolds the meaning of the sacraments is unreasonable. Why should one hold that, when he uses plain and orthodox expressions without allegorizing (as in Contra Celsum VIII.33 supra p. 69), he is more truly expressing his convictions and beliefs than when spiritualizing the words in which the eucharist is couched? Some of the strictly orthodox passages appear only in Latin translations and we know that in some respects the translators did not represent his words exactly as they found them. In passage after passage he sets the spiritual feeding on the Word on a higher plane than the sacramental which he regards as the more literal understanding of the words.

In his interpretation of the bread of life discourse Origen has advanced beyond Clement in the direction of a spiritualizing exegesis in that he relates it less frequently to the eucharist and shows that he

29. Grant writes: "Why is Origen so eager to exclude the literal meaning of scripture? We must remember that there is a difference between his understanding of the literal meaning and ours. What he means by 'literal' is the interpretation placed on scripture by the simplest of simple believers, those who cannot understand the meaning of metaphors, parables, or allegories, and who insist that every detail in them is literally true. Such people invariably understand poetry as prose." (R.M. Grant, A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible (London, 1965), p. 65).

holds that interpretation, because it is for him the more literal, to be by far the less desirable. Daniélou writes: "Il y a une affirmation claire de la supériorité de la manducation spirituelle."³⁰ In an eloquent passage of his commentary on the Song of Songs Origen describes the ideal Christian's delight in the Lord:

The eye, if it have seen his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, desires to see nothing evermore but that, nor would the hearing hear aught else except the Word of life and of salvation. The one whose hands have handled the Word of life will nevermore handle anything material, nor anything that breaks or perishes; nor will his palate suffer any other taste, when it has tasted the good Word of God and his flesh and the bread that comes down from heaven. Because he tastes so sweet and delightful, all other flavours will seem harsh and bitter to him now; and therefore he will feed on him alone. For he will find in him all the sweetness that ever he desired ... The hearers of these things ... must not take anything of what has been said with reference to bodily functions but rather employ them for grasping those divine senses of the inner man.
(Com. in Cant. I, PG XIII.95,96)³¹

Could anything indicate more clearly the orientation of Origen's thought when he set himself to 'discover the divine meaning' of the Scriptures?

30. J. Daniélou, Origène, p. 77.

31. ET R. P. Lawson, Origen, The Song of Songs Commentary and Homilies (London, 1957), p. 78f.

IV. EARLY LATIN WRITERS

Tertullian

Tertullian was well acquainted with allegorical exegesis of Scripture and was not above using it himself, but his preference was usually for a plainer more literal interpretation. He often rejected the exegesis of the Gnostics on the basis that they would not understand Scripture in its simple straightforward meaning. Hanson says: "Gnostic allegory impressed him as dangerous more strongly than Christian allegory struck him as felicitous."¹

O'Malley has endeavoured to define the principles that governed Tertullian's interpretation of Scripture.² His appeal is to the whole of Scripture as of one piece, for a statement of Scripture "should be interpreted agreeably to all other places" (Adv. Prax. xxvi.1, CCSL II, p. 1196).³ He insists in taking a passage in its context and frequently limits it to the historical situation it records. Thus Tertullian refutes his opponents' interpretation of Paul's injunctions on the remarriage of widows by reading it in the light of the following verses (Rom. vii.2ff; De Mono. xiii.2.3, CCSL II, p. 1248). He understands "Seek and you will find" (Mt vii.7) as applying only to the Jews in the early period of Jesus' ministry when there was still doubt as to his Messiahship, and not as a warrant for curious inquiry into the meaning of the sacred writings by those who have now the 'rule of faith' handed down by the apostles

1. R.P.C. Hanson, "Notes on Tertullian's Interpretation of Scripture" JTS N.S. 12, 1961, 274.

2. T. O'Malley, Tertullian and the Bible (Utrecht, 1967), pp. 130-134.

3. Cf also De Res. Mort. xviii.1, CCSL II, p. 942.

(De Praesc. viii, CCSL I, p. 193f). Indeed, he says: "All the declarations of the Lord have reasons and laws of their own and are not of unlimited and universal application" (De Fuga in Persec. xiii.2, CCSL II, p. 1154). His tendency to limit the meaning in this way is more noticeable in his later works. In an early tract he had said: "No enunciation of the Holy Spirit ought to be confined merely to the subject immediately in hand, and not applied and carried out with a view to every occasion to which its application is useful" (De Cult. Fem. ii.2.5, CCSL I, p. 355). His method of exegesis is to some extent affected by the object of his writing. In controversy he is more likely to limit the meaning or application of a text. The subtlety of an adversary's interpretation is opposed by an appeal to the simple reading (Adv. Marc. iv.19.6, CCSL I, p. 592), but when it will serve the purpose of his argument he himself will employ subtle and devious interpretations. The first psalm is interpreted as forbidding a Christian's attendance at the games in the arena (De Spec. iii, CCSL I, p. 230f). When not tempted, however, to use allegory as a means of defeating his adversary, his preference is usually for the simple reading. He speaks of the danger of twisting the meaning of parables to something quite different from their original intention (De Pud. viii.10.11, CCSL II, p. 1296). He preferred to be less wise in the Scriptures than too wise against them (De Pud. ix.22, CCSL II, p. 1299). He inquires of Praxeas "What sort of man are you, that you do not think words ought to be taken and understood in the sense in which they are written, especially when they are not expressed in allegories and parables, but in determinate and simple declarations?" (Adv. Prax. xiii.4, CCSL II, p. 1174).

It was from the Fourth Gospel that Tertullian chiefly drew his support to maintain against Praxeas the distinctions within the unity of

the Godhead. In this connection he quotes from the following verses of the sixth chapter: 29, 35, 37, 38, 40, 44, 45, 46, 68, 69. He then inquires "Did they believe him to be the Father or the Christ of the Father?" (Adv. Prax. xxi.18, CCSL II, p. 1189). He concludes his demonstration of the doctrine with the words:

Whenever, therefore, you take any of the statements of this Gospel and apply them to demonstrate the identity of the Father and the Son, supposing that they serve your views, you are contending against the definite purpose of the Gospel.

(Adv. Prax. xxv.4, CCSL II, p. 1196)

He distinguishes between the Valentinian doctrine of emanations and the sense in which the Word may be said to emanate from God. Unlike the heretical Aeon, the Son is not separated from the Father, since he alone knows the Father. It is not his own will, but his Father's, which he has accomplished (Jn vi.38). The intimate relation of Father and Son is further maintained by reference to a series of Johannine texts (Adv. Prax. viii.1-3, CCSL II, p. 1167).

In his exposition of the Lord's Prayer, Tertullian gives an interpretation of the bread of life. After things heavenly, he says, comes a petition for earthly necessities. He says the petition for daily bread may be interpreted in both a spiritual and a carnal sense.

We may rather understand 'Give us this day our daily bread' spiritually. For Christ is our bread because Christ is life and bread is life. 'I am', says he, 'the bread of life'; and a little above, 'The bread is the Word of the living God, who came down from the heavens.' Then, too, his body is reckoned to be in the bread: 'This is my body.' And so in petitioning for daily bread, we ask for perpetuity in Christ and indivisibility from his body. But, because the word is admissible in a carnal sense too, it cannot be so used without the religious remembrance of spiritual discipline; for he com-

mands that bread be prayed for, which is the only food necessary for believers, for all other things the nations seek after.

(De Ora. vi.2.3, CCSL I, p. 261)

In this case we see that Tertullian prefers the spiritual interpretation. It is not, however, the kind of spiritualizing in which Origen later indulged, when he also expounded the Lord's Prayer. He admits the validity of a carnal understanding, though he says little about it, whereas Origen on the other hand will repudiate the literal sense entirely. "Then too" suggests that he is about to give a different interpretation, i.e., the eucharist, so that what precedes could be taken to mean 'Christ himself.' The direction of Tertullian's exegesis is then through the words of Jesus on the bread of life directly to the eucharist. Origen also dwells on the Johannine passage but never directly mentions the eucharist. Of the word of teaching which Origen emphasizes, Tertullian says nothing, unless he may be said to hint at it in the phrase "the word (sermo) of the living God." His concise expressions suggest ideas which he does not spell out in detail. "Indivisibility from his body" possibly refers to the idea that believers are incorporated in the Church insofar as they participate in the eucharist. He does not make plain just what is in his mind when he speaks of the bread which is the only food necessary for believers. Judging from the next phrase, it might be righteousness (Mt vi.33). It is, however, most probably the eucharist. He goes on to mention a number of parables in which he says a similar lesson is taught - those which point to the providence of God (Mt vii.9, Lk xi.5-6, and probably ~~Mt~~ ^{Mk} vii.27 in the question "Does a father take away bread from his children and hand it to dogs?"). Although these parables strike us as more related to the necessities of everyday existence, for Tertullian they seem to have eucharistic connotations as well.

In connection with the petition "Thy will be done" Tertullian alludes to vs 38 when he speaks of how the Lord did the will of God in preaching, working and suffering, and calls upon Christians, following Christ's example, to preach, work and endure unto death (De Ora. iv.3, CCSL I, p. 259f).

Tertullian's other most important use of the discourse is in his defence of a bodily resurrection. In it we have an instance of special pleading which draws from the words of Christ something other than their simple meaning would convey. Quoting John vi.38 "I came not to do my own will, but the Father's who sent me," he says:

What, I ask, is that will? "That of all which he has given me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day" (Jn vi.39). Now what had Christ received of the Father but that which he had himself put on? Man, of course, in his texture of flesh and soul. Neither, therefore, of those parts which he has received will he allow to perish.

(De Res. Mort. xxxiv.9.10, CCSL II, p. 965f)

Somewhat later, having spoken of the greater value of men than sparrows, Tertullian returns to the same argument.

He affirms lastly that "the very hairs of our head are numbered" and in the affirmation he of course includes the promise of their safety; for if they were to be lost, where would be the use of having taken such a numerical care of them? Surely the only use lies in the truth "that of all which the Father has given to me, I should lose none" - not even a hair, as also not an eye nor a tooth.

(De Res. Mort. xxxv.10.11, CCSL II, p. 967f)

He is quite evidently writing against those who would deny a bodily resurrection.

Again, by a reading of verse 63 in its context, in accordance with his exegetical principles, he succeeds in making it support the same doctrine. His argument, however, is not particularly convincing.

He is, in fact, doing just what he elsewhere criticizes his adversaries for doing, forcing a passage to yield a preconceived doctrine which the author had never intended it to convey. The passage is an interesting example of that kind of exegesis.

He says that the flesh profits nothing. But the meaning must be regulated by the subject that is spoken of. Now because they thought his discourse harsh and intolerable, supposing that he had really and literally enjoined on them to eat his flesh, he, with a view of ordering the state of salvation as a spiritual thing, set out with the principle "It is the spirit that quickens" and then added "The flesh profits nothing" - meaning, of course, to the giving of life. He also goes on to explain what he would have understood by 'spirit'. "The words that I speak to you are spirit and are life." In a like sense he had previously said: "He that hears my words and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but shall pass from death to life." Constituting, therefore, his word as the life-giving principle, because that word is spirit and life, he likewise called his flesh by the same appellation; because, too, the word had become flesh. We ought, therefore, to desire him that we may have life and to devour him with the ear, and to ruminate on him with the understanding, and to digest him by faith. Now, just before he had declared his flesh to be "the bread which comes down from heaven" impressing on his hearers constantly under the allegory of necessary food the memory of their forefathers who had preferred the bread and flesh of Egypt to their divine calling. Then turning his subject to their reflections because he perceived that they were going to be scattered from him, he says, "The flesh profits nothing." Now, what is there to destroy the resurrection of the flesh? As if there might not be something which although it does not itself profit might yet be capable of being profited by something else. The spirit profits for it imparts life. The flesh does not profit for it is subject to death. Therefore he has put the two propositions in a way that favours our belief. For by showing what profits and what does not profit he has thrown light equally upon that which receives as well as that which gives the profit - the spirit giving life to the flesh which has been subdued by

death. For "the hour," says he, "is coming when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live." Now, what is "the dead" but the flesh? and what "the voice of God" but the Word? and what is the Word but the Spirit who shall justly raise the flesh which he had himself become, and from death which he himself suffered, and from the grave in which he himself was laid?

(De Res. Mort. xxxvii.1-7, CCSL II, p. 969f)

In the sentence about devouring, ruminating upon and digesting the Word, there is almost an Alexandrian ring, but Tertullian's interests are far removed from the spiritual speculations of Clement and Origen. He returns almost immediately to the subject of bodily resurrection.

John's stress on the flesh in this chapter appears to be intended much more as an assertion of the reality of the incarnation, as opposed to docetism, than as an affirmation of a fleshly resurrection. The resurrection he indeed maintains (vs 39, 40, 44, 54) but the very verse upon which Tertullian bases his argument is the one which qualifies the earlier more materialistic phrases, so that it is possible to read them in a spiritualized way and interpret them as speaking of a resurrection that is not one of flesh and blood.

Tertullian quotes the same verse (63) when he is expounding Paul's dictum "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God" (I Cor. xv.50). It is not the resurrection that is denied them, he says, but the kingdom which is incidental to the resurrection since men may also be raised for judgment. A difference is made between men because of their conduct in the flesh not because of its substance. Therefore, he says, flesh and blood do not inherit the kingdom alone and in themselves but they need the Spirit which vivifies them for the Kingdom (De Res. Mort. i.1-6, CCSL II, p. 992f).

In this case also Tertullian has misinterpreted his scriptural author, for Paul has plainly made a distinction between earthly and heavenly bodies (I Cor. xv.40) and natural and spiritual bodies (vs 44) to the very end, it would seem, that a fleshly resurrection is denied.

In a passage in which Tertullian wishes to emphasize the distinction between Christ's flesh and soul, so that neither one should be thought to have changed into the other, he seeks support in Christ's own words by saying:

Even by Christ himself each substance has been separately mentioned by itself, in conformity, of course, to the distinction which exists between the properties of both, the soul by itself and the flesh by itself.

(De Carne Christi xiii, CCSL II, p. 898)

Matthew xxvi.38 and John vi.51 (in part) are then quoted. This passage seems to have no particular value for determining his understanding of the verse from John. The treatise was apparently written against docetism.

Tertullian's exegesis in general has commended itself to commentators as characterized by "common sense, realism and restraint."⁴ O'Malley says he has attracted attention as having "formulated the norms of a good exegesis."⁵ We have no wish to deny the validity of these judgments based as they are on a consideration of the whole range of his writings. The passages with which we have been dealing form a very limited example of his exegesis. That from the De Oratione is in the tradition and mood of the times and is certainly restrained in comparison with Origen's treatment of the subject. In the excerpts from the De

4. R.P.C. Hanson, op. cit., JTS N.S. 12, 1961, 275.

5. T. O'Malley, op. cit., p. 130.

Resurrectione Mortuorum, however, even while employing the methods that have elicited approbation from the critics, he is seen to impose a meaning upon the text rather than extract the writer's intended meaning from it.

Tertullian, in company with many exegetes, did not always follow his own best insights into the manner in which an interpreter should deal with the Scriptures. He was often led by polemical or controversial aims to press a passage beyond the sense that it could reasonably bear. O'Malley admits that Tertullian is "very largely determined by the subject matter and the adversary of the moment."⁶

The passage dealing with the petition from the Lord's Prayer is one that has been taken to indicate Tertullian's view of the eucharistic elements. 'Corpus eius in pane censetur' has been appealed to both by those who consider him to hold a doctrine verging on transubstantiation and by those who think that for him the elements were only representative and symbolic. Blunt translated the words: "In the bread is understood his body."⁷ Swete uses the expression: "He included his body 'in the category of bread'."⁸ D'Alès says: "Le corps du Christ est ... une espèce (entre autres) de pain."⁹ Hitchcock argues that "the context shows that the whole passage is governed by a 'spiritualis disciplina' which rules out a literal meaning of 'censetur'."¹⁰ In discussing the

6. Ibid., p. 173.

7. J.J. Blunt, On the Right Use of the Early Fathers (London, 1869), p.457.

8. H.B. Swete, "Eucharistic Belief in the Second and Third Centuries" JTS 3, 1902, 173.

9. A. D'Alès, La Théologie de Tertullien (Paris, 1905), p. 366.

10. F.R.M. Hitchcock, "Tertullian's Views on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper" CQR 134, 1942, 22.

various meanings of 'censeri' he remarks that even Leimbach, who wished to render 'censeri' as 'esse' to support the realist view, admitted that that translation was never necessary.¹¹ The passage cannot be regarded as presenting a decisive view one way or the other. Other references to the sacrament may be examined in an attempt to clarify his idea of the bread in the passage of De Oratione.

Hitchcock draws attention to a passage in De Resurrectione Mortuorum viii.3, (CCSL II, p. 931) in which Tertullian enumerates a series of ways in which the flesh serves spiritual ends to the benefit of the soul. It is washed for the soul's cleansing, anointed for its consecration, signed with the cross for its strengthening, receives the imposition of hands for its illumination and finally "feeds on the body and blood of Christ that the soul may be fattened on God." Hitchcock regards these as instances of the outward sign of the inward grace and argues that since the first four are symbolical the fifth must be so too.¹²

It must be remembered that all Tertullian's references to the eucharist are of a more or less incidental nature. He writes no treatise on the sacrament as such but mentions it in the course of arguments about other topics, more often than not of a controversial kind. In this case he is showing the inseparability of soul and body to support his teaching on the resurrection of the flesh. We are not justified in making deductions in such cases regarding concepts or relations that were probably not part of his thought then or perhaps at any time. This caution applies to all his references to the eucharist in view of their incidental aspect.

11. Ibid., p. 23.

12. F.R.M. Hitchcock, op. cit., CQR 134, 1942, 31; cf Adv. Marc. i.14.3, CCSL I, p. 455 for a somewhat similar series.

Another way in which Tertullian speaks of the eucharistic bread is found in his description of the institution of the rite by Christ: "Then having taken the bread and given it to his disciples, he made it his own body by saying 'This is my body', that is, the figure of my body" (Adv. Marc. iv.40.3, CCSL I, p. 656).

O'Malley asserts that Tertullian's exegesis is built around the word 'figura'.¹³ He can use it simply in the rhetorical sense of a figure of speech. Tracing the development of the word, O'Malley states that 'figura' and its verb 'figurare' are closely associated with the verb 'fingere' and show their related meanings in such a phrase as 'caro figuratus' used of the Virgin birth (Apol. xxi.14, CCSL I, p. 125) or 'figura inventus homo' (Adv. Marc. v.20.3, CCSL I, p. 724) as the translation of Phil. ii.8, 'found in fashion as a man.' Something more concrete than 'symbol' or 'figure' would be required to translate these instances. Hitchcock asserts that "wherever 'figurare' and 'figura' are used by Tertullian a metaphorical meaning is clearly right."¹⁴ But that cannot be maintained in view of the passages just mentioned.

Tertullian uses it frequently with the meaning 'type', as in "Hanc prius dicimus figuram futuri fuisse" (Adv. Marc. iii.16.4, CCSL I, p. 529) referring to Joshua as a type of Christ.

O'Malley points out that Tertullian held that the 'figura' or type must be "rooted in history" if it is to have the significance of a true revelation.¹⁵ Tertullian expresses this theory when stating his interpretation of Ezechiel's vision of dry bones:

13. T. O'Malley, op. cit., p. 158.

14. F.R.M. Hitchcock, op. cit., CQR 134, 1942, 25.

15. T. O'Malley, op. cit., p. 163.

By the very circumstance that the recovery of the Jewish state is prefigured (*figuratur*) by the re-incorporation and reunion of bones, proof is offered that this event will also happen to the bones, for the figure (*figura*) could not have been formed from bones, if the same thing were not to be realized in the bones also.

(*De Res. Mort.* xxx.4, *CCSL* II, p. 959)

Somewhat the same conception is expressed in the eucharistic passage quoted above, for just after the words '*id est figura corporis mei*' he says:

A figure, moreover, there would not have been unless there were a veritable body; an empty thing, a phantom, is incapable of a figure.

(*Adv. Marc.* iv.40.3, *CCSL* I, p. 656)

The intention of the argument in this case is to refute Marcion's docetism. As Turner has pointed out, that fact must be born in mind in any interpretation of Tertullian's words.¹⁶ The reality demanded in a relationship of type and antitype does not appear to be the same in these two examples. In one an actual restoration of the dry bones is required if they are to form a type for either the restoration of Israel or the resurrection of the flesh. In the other it is insisted that Christ must have possessed a real body, if the bread is truly to be called a type or symbol (*figura*) of that body. In the first reality must attach to the type, in the second to that of which it is the type.

Turner suggests that in this instance the phrase '*figura corporis mei*' appeared in the liturgy of the African church and that this factor governed Tertullian's inclusion of the words and his comment upon them.¹⁷

The variety of ways in which Tertullian used the term '*figura*'

16. C.H. Turner, "'Figura Corporis Mei' in Tertullian" *JTS* 7, 1906, 597.

17. *Ibid.*

(we have by no means mentioned them all) makes it most difficult, if not almost impossible, to decide what shade of meaning he attached to it in this particular instance. Harnack's attempt to define the nature of a symbol as understood in the early centuries has received considerable acceptance. He said "What we nowadays understand by 'symbol' is a thing which is not that which it represents; at that time 'symbol' denoted a thing which, in some kind of way, really is what it signifies; but, on the other hand, according to the ideas of that period, the really heavenly element lay either in or behind the visible form without being identical with it."¹⁸

Some such conception as this is probably what we should understand as indicated in each of the eucharistic passages referred to above. Tertullian's view of the elements would therefore be much nearer to that of the simple believer whose ideas of reverence for the elements are noted both by him and by Origen,¹⁹ than to the ideas seen to be held by Clement or Origen themselves. Tertullian speaks, in other places, very realistically of eating and of handling the body of Christ (De Idol. vii.1, CCSL II, p. 1106; De Res. Mort. viii.3, CCSL II, p. 931). He would therefore regard the elements as something more than a symbol in the modern sense but not as yet embracing the full scope of the ideas understood by the fully developed later doctrine of transubstantiation. The ideas found in the bread of life discourse would, therefore, be taken as symbolic in that sense and as warrant for very realistic terminology in connection with the Supper but not as signifying the full measure and extent of the

18. A. Harnack, History of Dogma Vol. II, ET N. Buchanan (London, 1896), p. 144f.

19. Tertullian De Corona iii.4, CCSL II, p. 1043; Origen Hom. in Ex. xiii.3, GCS 6, p. 274; concern to prevent bread or wine falling to the ground.

later teaching regarding the substance of the bread and wine.

We see in Tertullian a tendency to read the discourse on a more materialistic level with much less inclination to spiritualize it than in Alexandrian exegesis, even verse 63 having been made to serve the doctrine of actual bodily resurrection.

Cyprian

Réveillaud has postulated the existence of an anthology of biblical quotations which he calls Testimonia Inedita, similar to Cyprian's collection addressed to Quirinus, from which he believes Cyprian drew both in his correspondence and in the writing of his treatises.²⁰ By a comparison of the Scripture citations throughout the whole range of Cyprian's work he shows that the same groupings of verses appear again and again, and in even the same order, with such regularity as to make it unlikely that Cyprian was depending upon memory alone or copying from his own earlier writings.

The De Oratione Dominica contains a citation of John vi upholding Christ as example in the exposition of the petition that God's will may be done (xiv, CSEL 3, p. 277), "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me" (Jn vi.38). This same verse appears also in the treatise De Habitu Virginum (vii, CSEL 3, p. 193) supporting an exhortation to do the will of God and follow in the footsteps of Christ. In both instances I John ii.15-17 is also quoted. Again in Ad Quirinum iii.19, (CSEL 3, p. 133) these two passages appear along with Mt xxvi.39

20. M. Réveillaud, Saint Cyprien, l'Oraison Dominicale (Paris, 1964), pp. 7-24.

which is one of the citations of De Oratione Dominica xiv. It is such instances of proof texts in combination that has led Réveillaud to the hypothesis of a Testimonia Inedita.

Whether or not Réveillaud has proved his point, and it must be admitted his argument is very persuasive, it remains true that Cyprian's custom was to cite Scripture regularly and frequently in connection with any subject upon which he wrote. He did not quote the philosophers and even earlier Christian authors seem to have had little attraction for him with the exception of Tertullian upon whom, though without naming him, he appears to be dependent in certain of his treatises.

Seldom did Cyprian consider a single biblical citation sufficient to support his teaching or reinforce his exhortation. Two, three, or even more passages are quoted in groups. From this custom, however, a principle of Cyprian's interpretation of Scripture may be recognized. He sought continually to bring passages together that they might mutually illuminate and strengthen each other. Réveillaud, indeed, comments: "Ce n'est pas Cyprien qui interprète la Bible, mais il sait montrer comment la Bible s'interprète elle-même."²¹

In Cyprian we find Scripture used more often as a support or proof of doctrines he is setting forth rather than in extended interpretation of connected passages. In his treatise on the Lord's Prayer, however, we have an exegesis of a passage at greater length. As in the works on prayer by Tertullian and Origen, the petition for daily bread offers an opportunity to refer to Christ's teaching as presented by John in the sixth chapter of his Gospel. The passage on the fourth petition is as follows:

21. Ibid., p. 55.

As the prayer goes forward, we make the request: Give us this day our daily bread. This may be understood both spiritually and literally, since either interpretation by its divine usefulness conduces to our salvation. For Christ is the bread of life, and this bread is not everyone's but is ours. And as we say 'Our Father' because he is the father of those who understand and believe, so also we call it 'our bread' because Christ is the bread of those who are in union with (*contingimus*) his body. Moreover, we ask that this bread be given to us daily lest we who are in Christ and daily receive his eucharist for the food of salvation by the interposition of some heinous sin be withheld from communion and forbidden the heavenly food, and so be separated from Christ's body. This he himself taught, saying, 'I am the bread of life which came down from heaven. If anyone eat of my bread he shall live forever. And the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world' (Jn vi.51). When therefore he says that if anyone eat of his bread he shall live forever, as it is manifest that those live who are in union with (*adtingunt*) his body and receive the eucharist by right of communion, so on the other hand we ought to fear and pray lest anyone, being forbidden to communicate, and so separated from Christ's body, remain far from salvation as he warned saying, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood you shall have no life in you" (Jn vi.53). And therefore we ask that our bread - that is Christ - may be given to us daily that we who abide and live in Christ may not fall away from his sanctification and body.

(*De Ora. Dom.* xviii, *CSEL* 3, p. 280f)

Cyprian takes the Johannine discourse to be eucharistic teaching. In particular he seems to regard it as teaching that union with Christ's body is dependent upon participation in the eucharist. By Christ's body we may take him to mean the Church, although the phrase is probably not limited in this passage to that idea.

Cyprian uses the phrases '*qui corpus eius contingimus*' and '*qui corpus eius adtingunt*'. Batiffol translates these verbs by 'toucher', asserting, "Ce corps auquel pense Cyprien n'est pas le corps mystique

mais le corps eucharistique, le verbe 'contingere' au sens actif ne pouvant s'entendre que d'un contact."²² Réveillaud prefers the translation 'qui sont conjoints à son corps'.²³ Moffat has the phrase 'belong to His Body'.²⁴ Réveillaud, drawing attention to the parallelism of Cyprian's style, considers the following clauses to be examples of it:

qui in Christo sumus et eucharistiam eius cottidie ad cibum salutis accipimus (CSEL 3, p. 280, l. 11f);
 qui corpus eius adtingunt et eucharistiam iure communicationis accipiunt (CSEL 3, p. 280, l. 19f).

From this he takes 'qui corpus eius adtingunt' to be synonymous with 'qui in Christo sumus' and so a reference to the mystic body of Christ, the Church. At the same time he would admit that in this passage Cyprian understands 'corpus' simultaneously as both mystic and eucharistic body. It would be unwise to choose dogmatically between the two. Perhaps Cyprian did have both senses in mind.

Fahey, in criticising Réveillaud's translation, thinks that he sees the phrase 'corpus eius contingimus' as referring only to the Church,²⁵ but Réveillaud explicitly says, "nous pensons que dans ce chapitre Cyprien entend par corpus à la fois le pain de l'eucharistie et le corps mystique du Christ."²⁶

22. P. Batiffol, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

23. M. Réveillaud, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

24. J. Moffat, "Cyprian on the Lord's Prayer" *Exp* 18 Eighth Series, 1919, 184.

25. M.A. Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third Century Exegesis* (Tubingen, 1971), p. 657, n. 49.

26. M. Réveillaud, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

Cyprian's belief in the exclusiveness of the Church and the need for a strict discipline of its members may be discerned here. It is 'our bread', not 'everyone's'. One senses the atmosphere of a closely knit community. The possibility of being withheld from communion is to be feared. Cyprian held a high doctrine of the Church expressed in his phrase, "Salus extra ecclesiam non est " (Epis. lxxiii.21, CSEL 3, p. 795).

The treatise is considered to have been written during the early part of the Decian persecution when there was danger of some Christians losing the 'right of communion' by complying with the demands of the civil authorities. Réveillaud perhaps attempts to date it too precisely in the month of April 250, claiming that although some confessors had already become martyrs, "Les apostasies ne se sont pas encore produites."²⁷ The references in this passage are not incompatible with the first instances of apostasy.

Cyprian here refers to daily communion. Réveillaud thinks that Benson looked upon the daily eucharist here mentioned as a sign of the people's fear "devant un avenir menaçant,"²⁸ but it is not the daily feature that Benson sees as indicating the crisis of the time but rather the concern for the souls of those to whom it is forbidden.²⁹ Cyprian elsewhere refers to the eucharist as though it were customary for the priests to celebrate it each day (Epis. lvii.3, CSEL 3, p. 652). When Réveillaud refers to Tertullian, however, as a witness to daily eucharist,

27. Ibid., p. 39.

28. Ibid., p. 37.

29. E.W. Benson, Cyprian, His Life, His Times, His Work (London, 1897), p.268.

he is reading more into the passage than is there. Tertullian referred the prayer for daily bread to the eucharist but that hardly constitutes an assertion of daily celebration (De Ora. vi, CCSL I, p. 261).

Elsewhere he speaks of the eucharist on station days (Wednesdays and Fridays) but seems nowhere to speak explicitly of daily communion (De Ora. xix, CCSL I, p. 267).

In comparing Cyprian's treatise with Tertullian's De Oratione, later writers have tended to stress his originality rather than his dependence. Monceaux uses the phrase 'la manie d'imitation',³⁰ whereas Labriolle says: "Il l'a suivi avec quelque indépendance".³¹ Of the twenty or more passages listed by Benson as showing verbal debts to Tertullian³² Réveillaud recognizes only four.³³ None of them appear in the section with which we are dealing. In the ideas expressed there is a certain similarity. In commenting upon the fourth petition, both ancient writers recognize a spiritual and a literal sense, although Cyprian gives much greater space to the literal than did his predecessor. Although both cite passages from the sixth chapter of John, Cyprian alone quotes those which speak of the flesh and blood of Christ. Each speaks of Christ's body in a way that seems to indicate a reference to the Church. Cyprian's commentary is more fully developed both with respect to the eucharist and also in his remarks on the literal sense.

30. P. Monceaux, Histoire Littéraire de l'Afrique Chrétienne, Tome II (Paris, 1902), p. 309.

31. P. de Labriolle, Histoire de la Littérature Latine Chrétienne (Paris, 1920), p. 214.

32. E.W. Benson, op. cit., pp. 276ff.

33. M. Réveillaud, op. cit., p. 5.

In the first book of the testimonies Ad Quirinum the Johannine sayings about the bread of life appear under the heading "That the Jews would lose while we should receive the bread and the cup of Christ and all his grace and that the new name of Christians should be blessed in the earth" (Ad Quir. I.22, CSEL 3, p. 57). The first citation is Isaiah lxxv.13-15 which begins "Thus says the Lord, Behold, they who serve me shall eat, but you shall be hungry", and is followed by others from the same prophet to the effect that nations from afar shall come and neither hunger nor thirst (Isa. v.26f) whereas the sustaining power of bread shall be taken away from the Jews (Isa. iii.1f). Then Cyprian quotes from the psalms, "O taste and see how sweet is the Lord" (Ps xxxiv.8) and finally from the Gospel, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he that trusts in me shall never thirst" (Jn vi.35) ending with Jn vii.37, 38 and Jn vi.53. The theme of eating and drinking is carried through all the biblical passages and shows how in the early Church the Scriptures were searched for passages which, removed from their context, and placed in an entirely new setting, would form a convincing argument for the doctrines and sacraments of the new people of God. It is a comment upon the way in which the revelation made by God through the prophets was understood and how even churchmen, such as Cyprian and his 'master' Tertullian, who paid more attention to the literal and contextual meaning than most, could see references to the sacraments in the most unlikely places.

Ad Quirinum III.25 places Jn vi.53 rather strangely along with Jn iii.5f under the heading "That unless a man have been baptized and born again, he cannot attain unto the kingdom of God" (CSEL 3, p. 140). The verses are clearly a reference to the two sacraments of baptism and

eucharist. The appearance of the word 'flesh' in each passage suggests the question whether Cyprian in thus placing them side by side saw any relationship between the two uses of the term. Did 'born of the flesh' signify for him 'receive life through the eucharist' - or is it merely coincidence that the passages he chose both refer to flesh? It is impossible to be certain but early Christian exegesis frequently drew together texts which contained a common word or phrase.

Cyprian's only other uses of John vi appear to be in connection with his controversies brought about by the schisms of his time. One of the issues upon which he wrote with unshakable conviction was the unity of the Church. He would not allow that schismatics or heretics had any right to call themselves the Church nor that their sacraments had any validity for Christians. Baptism in the name of Christ only by those, such as the Marcionites, who denied the Trinity, did not constitute baptism as the Church understood it and therefore those who were converted from such a heresy ought in Cyprian's opinion to undergo Christian baptism. The contrary practice was being followed by Pope Stephen at Rome. This was not a question of lapsed Christians who wished to return to the Church, for they would have received Christian baptism before their desertion under pressure of the imperial authorities, but rather of those who had turned to the Church after first having held a heretical belief.

In reply to Jubaianus who had written inquiring on that very matter, Cyprian wrote:

What else is it then, than to become a partaker with blaspheming heretics, to wish to maintain and assert that one who blasphemes and gravely sins against the Father and the Lord and God of Christ can receive remission of sins in the name of Christ? Moreover, how could it be that he who denies the Son of God has not the Father,

and he who denies the Father should be thought to have the Son, although the Son himself testifies and says: "No man can come to me except it were given to him by my Father" (Jn vi.65). So that it is evident that no remission of sins can be received in baptism from the Son, which it is not plain that the Father has granted, especially since he further repeats and says: "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up" (Mt xv.13).

(Epis. lxxiii.18, CSEL 3, p. 792)

With respect to those who left the Church to form a schismatical group Cyprian was convinced that in so doing they gave up of their own will their hope of salvation.

In writing to Cornelius, the Bishop of Rome, to defend himself against the calumnies of Felicissimus and his followers who, excommunicated in Carthage, had gone to Rome, Cyprian likened them to the followers of Christ who were offended by his discourse on the bread of life and ceased to follow him. He wrote:

And yet he did not rebuke them when they went away, nor even severely threaten them, but rather, turning to his apostles, said: "Will you also go away?" (Jn vi.67) manifestly observing the law whereby a man left to his own liberty and established in his own choice, himself desires for himself either death or salvation. Nevertheless, Peter, upon whom by the same Lord the Church has been built, speaking one for all and answering with the voice of the Church, says, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Jn vi. 68f), signifying doubtless and showing that those who departed from Christ perished by their own fault, yet that the Church which believes on Christ and holds that which it has once learned, never departs from him at all and that those are the Church who remain in the house of God.

(Epis. lix.7, CSEL 3, p. 674)

This passage shows that Cyprian looked upon Peter as speaking for the whole Church when he made his confession of faith. It is

implied that only the undivided Church has the words of eternal life; only there can Christ be found. Using the same passage in a later letter written to Pupianus to support much the same teaching, Cyprian defined more fully what he understood the Church to be from which Pupianus had separated himself.

And the Lord also in the Gospel when disciples forsook him as he spoke, turning to the twelve, said: "Will you also go away?" Then Peter answered him: "Lord, to whom shall we go ... (Jn vi.68f as above) ... Son of the living God." Peter speaks there, on whom the Church was to be built, teaching and showing in the name of the Church, that although a rebellious and arrogant multitude of those who will not hear and obey may depart, yet the Church does not depart from Christ, and they are the Church who are a people united to the priest and the flock which adheres to its shepherd. Hence you ought to know that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop and that if anyone is not with the bishop, he is not in the Church, and that those flatter themselves in vain that creep in, not having peace with God's priests, and think secretly to enter into communion with certain persons, while the Church, which is catholic and one, may not be sundered or divided but is indeed connected and bound together by the cement of priests who cohere with one another.

(Epis. lxvi.8, CSEL 3, p. 732f)

Although the privileges and dignity conferred upon Peter after his confession in the Matthean account (Mt xvi.18f) are not mentioned here, they are implied in the phrase "on whom the Church was to be built." Cyprian has chosen the Johannine version of the confession because its context speaks of a group of disciples separating themselves from those who continued to follow Jesus. Among the latter is Peter who represents the episcopate, the guarantee for Cyprian of the one true Church. The passage does not raise the question of the primacy of Peter's successors at Rome, a question that has surged around his reference to the matter of the Roman primacy in De Catholicae Ecclesiae

Unitate for which there are two alternative texts (De Cath. Eccl. Unit. 4-5, CSEL 3, p. 212ff). However, the importance of the bishop's office is here made very plain. Cyprian had experienced the problems that arose when some of the believers were not 'with the bishop' but took matters into their own hands. Confessors had granted absolution to lapsed Christians and in Cyprian's absence and without his approval presbyters had admitted them to communion. The laxer party, unable to gain readmittance to the Church on their own terms, had set up a rival bishop to oppose the authority of Cyprian. In determining where the Church is, the administration represented by the bishops appears to have greater weight than doctrine.

Cyprian's conception holds together the Church, Ministry and Sacraments in one coherent unity. The Church is the visible congregation of the bishop and his flock, outside which there are no authentic clergy regardless of their ordination. The sacraments of such persons have no saving validity. A schism breaks the unity and since the Church 'may not be sundered or divided' one party to the disagreement must be regarded as outside the Church. As it may happen that both are orthodox in belief, the true Church is known from the fact that it adheres to the bishop duly chosen and consecrated in succession with those who have held the office since apostolic times. As Greenslade points out, the unity for Cyprian "is not ideal, but actual" with a visible "structure", the episcopate.³⁴

The structure, the institution, seems to be of more importance than the content of the faith held. This, however, is only apparent,

34. S.L. Greenslade, Early Latin Theology, LCC Vol. v. (London, 1956), p. 120.

for Cyprian could not conceive of anyone, holding the faith in its entirety including faith in the divinely instituted Church, remaining aloof from the visible body or acting in opposition to its bishop.

The rigidity of Cyprian's conception excludes the possibility of anyone holding a true and saving faith outside the visible institution, that is, the idea of an invisible Church of the elect known only to God. The exclusiveness of his view of baptism, opposed in his own time by the Roman church, was later tempered and relaxed. Indeed, the majority of Christians, though wishing to hold the unity of the Church as a doctrine, have rejected Cyprian's definition of it. A conception of unity even in the presence of schism is possible by acknowledging other avenues of continuity with the apostolic Church instead of the episcopate alone, a realization of the true though imperfect unity to be found in a faith and life founded on and consistent with the Scriptures. In such a conception the unity of the Church, Ministry and Sacraments, even if less clearly recognizable, may be retained at the expense of the visible unity of the institution.

In Cyprian's use of the bread of life discourse it can be seen how the controversies of his time are reflected in his interpretation. His preoccupation with such matters enters into his concern to define the limits of the Church and the role of the Sacraments within it.

Novatian

Fausset describes Novatian's De Trinitate as "the earliest systematic treatise on its subject."³⁵ Tertullian's earlier Adversus Praxean had

35. W.Y. Fausset, Novatian's Treatise on the Trinity (Cambridge, 1909), p. vii.

been designed as a refutation of the monarchian or patripassian heresy rather than as a systematic statement of doctrine. Tertullian had, however, developed the trinitarian vocabulary and many of the arguments needed for such a treatise. McGiffert speaks of "the overmastering influence of Tertullian's thought" upon Novatian.³⁶ The schismatic bishop of Rome and contemporary of Cyprian was the first Roman theologian to write exclusively in Latin.³⁷ His work on the Trinity was composed before his break with the Catholic Church³⁸ and expresses the orthodox theology of his time. Indeed, as Fausset indicates, "the Novatian schism was a revolt against the discipline, not against the doctrine of the Catholic Church."³⁹

The treatise deals in turn with the teaching of the Scriptures regarding Father, Son and Holy Spirit and concludes with a short section on the Unity of the Godhead. The space and attention given to the christological doctrine far exceeds the consideration devoted to the other aspects of the subject. Novatian states that his chief concern has been "to explain the rule of truth in regard to the person of Christ" (De Trin. xxi, F. p. 76). He particularly opposes the misconceptions of those who maintained that Christ was only a man, or confused him with the Father, or again taught a docetic understanding of his person.

The criteria he uses to test the validity of any doctrine are the statements of Scripture and the Church's tradition (De Trin. xxx, F. p. 112). The truth of the utterances of the Scriptures is never questioned

36. A.C. McGiffert, A History of Christian Thought, Vol. II (London, 1933), p. 30 fn.

37. P. de Labriolle, op. cit., p. 230.

38. W.Y. Fausset, op. cit., p. xxvi.

39. Ibid., p. xvii.

and his constant appeal to them shows that they must have been accepted by his opponents in the same manner. They too advanced various texts with their own interpretation of their meaning to support their teaching. The truth of the Bible is stated with finality more than once. Novatian says: "Assuredly Scripture does not lie" (De Trin. xviii, F. p. 62). Again he speaks of "the heavenly Scriptures which never deceive" (De Trin. xxx, F. p. 114). Referring to the warning of Revelation xii.18, 19, he writes: "We cannot assert what we cannot add to the written record" (De Trin. xvi, F. p. 57). Several times he refers to the 'rule of truth' as that which teaches what we should believe (De Trin. i, ix, xvii, F. pp. 1, 28, 58), and, writing of the Holy Spirit, he says that it is he who "explains the rule of truth" (xxix, F. p. 110).

In defending his christological doctrine Novatian places great dependence on the Fourth Gospel. In doing so he has followed the lead of Tertullian who had relied upon John in his Adversus Praxean (xxi and four following chapters) to assert the distinctions of the persons in the Godhead. In choosing to rely chiefly on John Novatian recognizes that it contains the clearest affirmations of Christ's divinity. He cites four times oftener from it than he does from the three Synoptics taken together. Especially in that portion of the treatise where he is asserting the doctrine of the divine nature of Christ, it is as though the Johannine Gospel were lying open before him as he wrote and he were going systematically through it for all the passages that could be applied to his argument. In chapter xiv of his work he has reached the discourse on the bread of life. He writes:

If Christ is only man, how does he say, 'I am the bread of eternal life, who came down from heaven' (Jn vi.51) when neither can mortal man be himself the bread of life, nor has man descended from heaven, since in heaven no place has been appointed for the material of frailty? If Christ is only man, how does he declare, 'For no man has seen the Father at any time, except he who is of the Father, he has seen him' (Jn vi.46) seeing that if Christ is only man, he could not have seen God, for no man has seen God; but if, being of God, he saw God, he wished himself to be understood to be more than man, as having seen God. If Christ is only man, why does he say, 'What if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?' (Jn vi.62) But he did ascend into heaven; he was therefore before in heaven as heaven is the place to which he returns where he was before. But if he was sent down by the Father from heaven, he assuredly is not only man; for, as we said, a man could not come down from heaven. He was not, then, 'before' in heaven as man, but he ascended to that place where as a man he had not been; while he descended as the Word of God which was in heaven - that Word, I repeat, of God, who is also God, 'through whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made'. So it was not as man that he came down from heaven, but as the Word of God, that is, as God.

(De Trin. xiv, F. p. 47f)

This is part of the section of the work in which Novatian demonstrates Christ's divine nature by citing the many things which Scripture asserts that he did which are beyond the power of man to do. Christ is said to have seen the Father, descended from heaven and returned there, to have been the agent in creation, to be the bread of life. Novatian sees these statements as proof of Christ's existence in the heavenly sphere prior to his earthly life as man. Novatian nowhere says what he understands by Christ's saying 'I am the bread of life' but here takes it for granted that such a title cannot be predicated of man as one who is subject to death. Similarly heaven is regarded as the sphere with which man by his nature has no affinity. The vision of God is beyond the

capability of man. Novatian later expands his thoughts on this theme when explaining his understanding of the Old Testament assertion that God was seen by Abraham (Gen. xii.7). The seeming contradiction between that and the text which says 'No man can see God and live' (Ex. xxxiii.20) is resolved by the conception that it was Christ, the Son of God, 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. i.15), who appeared on various occasions to the patriarchs "that weak and frail human nature might in time become accustomed to see in him ... God the Father" (De Trin. xviii, F. p. 62).

Citing a series of Johannine texts among which is John vi.38, Novatian asserts the divinity of Christ "who is proved to be not man only, because Son of man, but also God, because Son of God" (De Trin. xxi, F. p. 77). And again, this time to maintain the distinction between the Father and the Son against the monarchian doctrine that Christ was God, the Father, after a number of Old Testament texts he places John vi.38 at the head of a long series from the Fourth Gospel (De Trin. xxvi, F. p. 95).

Fausset has said that Novatian "fails to provide a doctrine of Christ's equality with the Father which shall give to his formula 'Christus deus' its full content."⁴⁰ It is true that there is a definite subordination in the relationship of the Son to the Father in Novatian's teaching. He states: "He is less than the Father" (De Trin. xxvii, F. p. 99; also xxxi, F. p. 118). Obedience and submission to the Father imply the subordinate role of the Son. "He does nothing of his own will and makes nothing of his own counsel and comes not from himself but obeys

40. Ibid., p. xlvii.

every command and injunction of the Father" (De Trin. xxxi, F. p. 120). Although Novatian wrote against monarchians, he too believed too firmly in the majesty and power of the divine Father to allow it to be shared in perfect equality even by the Son. His divinity is derivative. Although Novatian declares him to be eternal and of the same substance as the Father ("He is eternally in the Father", xxxi, F. p. 117; "being none other than the divine personal substance", xxxi, F. p. 118; he is "the bread of eternal life", xiv, F. p. 47), yet "he derived his origin, in being born, from him who is the One God" (xxxi, F. p. 120). It is his origin in the Father which necessitates his subordination for Novatian.

If he were like the Father without an origin
... if he were not the Son but the Father,
begetting another Son from himself, of course
he would have been ranked with the Father and
been declared to be as great as he.

(De Trin. xxxi, F. p. 119)

In making this distinction between the persons of the deity Novatian was basing his doctrine upon those statements in Scripture which imply such an inequality. He was simply being true to the first of his two criteria for doctrine. The second, the rule of truth, had not at that time developed the doctrine and formulae which were to determine the Church's teaching about the Trinity in the next century.

With such passages before us we have a somewhat fuller understanding of what Novatian meant when, at the end of the passage from chapter xiv quoted above, he clearly stated that Christ is God.

Novatian cites John's sixth chapter once in refuting the patripassians. The verse, 'I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of him that sent me' (Jn vi.38), is used among many others to show that Christ and the Father are distinct persons, not to be confused, in spite of the

statement 'I and my Father are one' (Jn x.30; De Trin. xxvi, F. p. 95).

In the discourse Novatian looks upon Jesus as speaking with the definite intention of declaring himself to be 'more than man'. It is chiefly as a witness to the divinity of Christ that he has made use of it.

In his letter on Jewish meats Novatian repudiates the regulations prohibiting the use of certain kinds of meat, relying upon a number of Pauline texts. Then, raising the discussion to a higher spiritual plane, he says:

For he who worships the Lord by meats is merely as one who has his belly for his Lord. The meat, I say, true and holy and pure is a true faith, an unspotted conscience and an innocent soul.

(PL III.960)

He then quotes to confirm this view the following sayings from John's Gospel: 'My work is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work' (Jn iv.34); 'You seek me not because you saw the miracles, but because you ate my loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perishes but for the meat which endures to eternal life which the Son of man will give you; for him has the Father sealed' (Jn vi.26f).

Novatian's references to the chapter are not of an exegetical character but only in the nature of proof texts.

V. SYRIAN WRITERS

Tatian

Sanders, in tracing the evidence for the knowledge and use of the Fourth Gospel in the early Church, cites certain passages from Tatian's Address to the Greeks to show that the author was familiar with that work. It is his judgment that Tatian "had begun to use the Gospel as a source for his theology, and not merely for incidental quotations and allusions."¹ It appears strange that Sanders should make no mention at all of the compilation of the Diatessaron as a testimony to his knowledge of John. Rendel Harris says of Tatian's procedure in composing the harmony: "Hardly a word is dropped by Tatian that could have been introduced" although "he does not hesitate to gloss his text."² An examination of the portion of the Diatessaron in which John's sixth chapter is used confirms that statement at least with regard to that part of the Gospel.

Tatian has made a curious alteration in the wording of the verses in which Jesus speaks of his flesh and blood. The term 'flesh' is replaced in each instance by the word for body. He thus brings the passage into greater harmony with the wording used in the account of the Last Supper. In this he shows a difference of practice from that of his former teacher Justin who in his account of Christian worship prefers to use the term 'flesh' as found in John (I Apol. lxvi). Higgins notes the translation of σῶμα in verses 51-58 and 63 by the word for 'body' in the Old Syriac and the Peshitta, and suggests a conscious reversion

1. J.N. Sanders, op. cit., p. 34.

2. J.R. Harris, The Diatessaron of Tatian, A Preliminary Study (London, 1890), p. 42.

to the other tradition of the eucharistic words in which $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ was used.³ From that change we may assume that the bread of life discourse probably had some eucharistic significance for Tatian. If it were to be thought that the alteration was due to his ascetic depreciation of the flesh, and that 'body' appeared to him a less offensive term with which to refer to Christ, it is significant that when he uses John i.14 "The Word became flesh," he does not make any change to a less offensive term.

Nothing further can be determined from Tatian's writings as to his understanding of the sixth chapter. The discourse simply stands in the Diatessaron as the sequel to the feeding of the five thousand as it does in the Gospel. The story of the feeding of the multitude is conflated from the various gospel accounts with no interpretative additions.

Ephrem the Syrian

The hymns of Ephrem the Syrian are written in a style that owes much to the Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament. Like it they are composed on the principle of parallelism, although unlike the Hebrew they also conform to a syllabic pattern.⁴ In Ephrem's exegetical works the idea of parallelism becomes along with symbolism his most important principle of interpretation. Leloir has asserted that "l'herméneutique d'Éphrem se ramène essentiellement à deux lois, celle du symbolisme et celle du parallélisme, tantôt synonymique, tantôt antithétique."⁵ Everywhere

3. A.J.B. Higgins, op.cit., p. 83, fn3.

4. J. Gwynn, ed., Selections from the hymns and Homilies of Ephraim the Syrian and from the Demonstrations of Aphrahat the Persian Sage, NPNF xiii (2nd series), (Oxford, 1898), p. 148.

5. L. Leloir, Doctrines et Méthodes de S. Éphrem d'après son Commentaire de l'évangile concordant (Louvain, 1961) p. 40.

Ephrem sees correspondences and contrasts between persons and events, between the Old Testament and the New. Everything can be understood from some point of view as the symbol or the counterpart of something else.

Ephrem exclaims in one of his hymns: "This Jesus has multiplied mysteries for us (so J.T.S. Stopford⁶; Leloir translates as 'symboles'⁷). Amid billows of mysteries have I fallen, which show me in parables the life (Leloir: *résurrection*) of the dead, in all mysteries and in all types" (*Nisibene Hymns* xxxix.17). It is in such interrelationships that he appears to understand the unity of the Scriptures.

His commentary on Tatian's *Diatessaron* presents many instances of this kind. In his comments on the discourse of Jesus on the bread of life it is the early part dealing with the analogies between Jesus and Moses which interests him. Jesus is the prophet 'like unto me' (Deut. xviii.15). Enumerating the parallels between them, Ephrem mentions walking on the sea (a reference, no doubt, to the crossing of the Red Sea), appearing in the cloud (an allusion perhaps to Moses' conference with God on Mount Sinai, Ex. xx.21, and the Transfiguration), the delivering of God's people and the entrusting of the people to Joshua (Deut. xxxi.7f) as Jesus had entrusted Mary, his Church, to John (Jn xix.26f). Ephrem remarks that it was not from lack of power that Jesus refused to perform the sign they wished but because he recognized that it would be useless to do so. The bread that he offers is greater than that of Moses because it assures eternal life and is given not for Israelites only but for the whole world.

6. ET J.T.S. Stopford, "The Nisibene Hymns" *NPNF* xiii (2nd series) ed., J. Gwynn, p. 202.

7. L. Leloir, *Commentaire de l'Évangile Concordant ou Diatessaron* SC 121 (Paris, 1966), p. 31.

Chabot has said: "Éphrem est un moraliste, un prédicateur, plus qu'un théologien,"⁸ and bearing out that impression, we find him closing the passage with an appeal that all might know themselves drawn and called to be the children of the Father (Comm. on Dia. xii.10.11, SC 121, p. 218ff).

In his remarks on the earlier portion of the chapter, Ephrem understands the multiplication of the loaves as looking forward to the eucharist and closely parallels it in that sense with the turning of water into wine at Cana. In these miracles Jesus, he says, was habituating the people to his bread and his wine in preparation for the time when he would give them his body and his blood. He caused them to taste this perishable food to stir up within them the desire for that which was life-giving. In the fact that the five thousand on the hillside and the guests at Cana were freely fed, although they could have paid for bread and wine, Ephrem sees symbolized the free nature of the supreme gift. The gathering of the remnants in baskets is said to have been ordered so that, after being kept several days, they would constitute proof that what had happened had been no mere vision (Comm. on Dia. xii.1-5, SC 121, p. 213-216).

During the discussion of this portion of the gospel Ephrem does not refer directly to the words of Jesus about eating his flesh and drinking his blood as found in John vi, but at two other points in his commentary he has occasion to quote them. The first is when he refers to the disciples of Jesus administering baptism as recorded in John iv.2. This they could not have done, he says, if they had not themselves been baptized. As proof of their baptism he cites the words of Jesus to Simon Peter, "He who is washed needs only to wash his feet" (Jn xiii.10). This may be

8. J. B. Chabot, Littérature Syriacque (Paris, 1934), p. 27.

taken to refer to their baptism in water, he says, but it may also be that the word of Christ was for them a baptism, according to the words of Jesus, "You are clean through the word that I have spoken to you" (Jn xv.3). Ephrem records a third interpretation, not his own, but one put forward by others, namely, that the giving of his body to them constituted their baptism. Indeed, he says, if they had either baptized or been baptized without having faith in his body, how could he have said: "If you do not eat my flesh and drink my blood, you do not have life" (Jn vi.53). The difficulty with regard to this last interpretation is that according to the narrative in the gospel, the disciples baptized before the Lord's body was given to them, if by that phrase Ephrem intends us to understand their eating of the Last Supper as the citation of John vi.53 would suggest. At the beginning of the argument the element of time seems to be important for Ephrem but he does not raise the point in connection with the third interpretation of the disciples' own baptism. That they may have received baptism from John the Baptist does not appear to have occurred to Ephrem (Comm. on Dia. v.15.16, SC 121, p. 114).

It is in speaking of the salvation of the thief upon the cross (Lk xxiii.42f) that Ephrem again makes use of these words. The thief affords him also a number of apt parallels. As Satan had robbed Jesus of one of his disciples, the Lord now deprived Satan of one of his. Man had stretched out his hands towards the tree of knowledge, being unworthy to reach out to the tree of life; the Saviour affixed these hands to the cross that they might gain life. Paradise, closed by Adam who was first righteous and afterwards a sinner, was opened by a sinner, now repentant. The Jews had chosen a thief in preference to Jesus; he now chose a thief

in preference to them. Ephrem then poses the question: if the thief had not eaten the flesh of the Lord Jesus, how did he obtain life? (Jn vi.53) and answers it by a saying of Paul's: we who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death (Rom. vi.3). By the mystery of the water and blood flowing from the Saviour's side the thief received the baptism which brought him forgiveness of sins (Comm. on Dia. xx.24-26, SC 121, p. 360ff). Here we have examples of both parallelism and symbolism as interpretative devices.

From these two examples of his exegesis, one might infer that Ephrem was not a strict sacramentalist. The word of Jesus may constitute baptism for the disciples as long as there is faith in his body. The thief is considered to have received both sacraments mysteriously - perhaps by the 'word' of Jesus, for Ephrem concludes with the saying, 'You will be with me in paradise' (Lk xxiii.43).

Ortiz de Urbino, in summarizing Ephrem's chief doctrinal tenets, says of the eucharist: "Clara habentur de praesentia reali in eucharistia," quoting from Ephrem "corpus et sanguinem eius tangimus, quod est pignus vitae nostrae." And of the need for the sacrament he cites the sentence: "Qui non communicat nec participat huic sacramento non habet vitam".⁹

Other passages from Ephrem's works support this judgment. Among those which affirm the real presence are a number which speak of it as a spiritual presence only, the Holy Spirit being spoken of under the symbol of fire.

9. I. Ortiz de Urbino, Patrologia Syriaca (Rome, 1958), p. 76f.

In thy bread is hidden the Spirit that cannot be eaten;
in thy wine there dwells the Fire that cannot be drunk.
The Spirit in thy bread and the Fire in thy cup are
distinct miracles which our lips receive.

(Adv. Scrut. Rhythm 10.3)¹⁰

Thy garment, seeing it was the covering of thy human
nature, and thy body, seeing it was the covering of
thy divine nature, two coverings they were to thee,
Lord, the garment and the body, that bread, the bread
of life ... the body covers thy glorious, fearful
brightness, the garment covered thy feebler nature,
the bread covers the Fire that dwells in it.

(Adv. Scrut. Rhythm 19.1)¹¹

If then this Fire is of a miraculous nature ... which
flies into bread, and blends itself with water, and
dwells in everything ... a symbol of the Spirit is
in it, a type of the Holy Spirit who is mingled in
water that it may become a propitiation and is blended
with bread that it may become a sacrifice.

(Adv. Scrut. Rhythm 40.3)¹²

Of the power of the sacrament he says:

The spiritual bread, as the giver of it quickens
the spiritual spiritually, and he that receives it
carnally receives it rashly to no profit. This
bread of grace let the spirit receive discerningly
as the medicine of life.

(Hymns on the Nativity 3)¹³

We have eaten thee, O Lord, we have drunken thee
... that we might have life in thee.

(Adv. Scrut. Rhythm 10.7)¹⁴

10. ET J.B. Morris, Select Works of S. Ephrem the Syrian (Oxford, 1847), p. 146.

11. ET J.B. Morris, ibid., p. 170.

12. ET J.B. Morris, ibid., p. 235.

13. ET J.B. Morris, NPNF xiii (2nd series) ed., J. Gwynn, p. 231.

14. ET J.B. Morris, Select Works of S. Ephrem the Syrian, p. 148.

He can speak also of the elements very realistically as if they were the very body of Christ in the hands of the communicants.

Glory to that Voice which became body and to the Word of the High One that became flesh! Hear him also, O ears, and see him, O eyes, and feel him, O hands, and eat him, O mouth!

(Hymns on the Nativity 3)¹⁵

With similar vividness he speaks of the efficacy of the body and blood to protect the believer against evil.

The fire will keep far off from my members perceiving in me the savour of thy body and blood.

(Can. 81)¹⁶

From hateful concupiscence deliver me through thy living body which I have eaten; and I will lie down and sleep in peace and let thy blood be a protector to me.

(Paraen. 30)¹⁷

Much of what Ephrem wrote was poetry and so we may expect from him the more vivid speech that is the product of a certain poetic licence. From the consideration of such passages, however, it appears that the manner in which he speaks in his commentary on the Diatessaron of the disciples' baptism and of the salvation of the repentant thief is not typical of his thinking about the sacraments. The disciples and the thief are rather special cases for which he feels he must find some explanation to account for their apparent lack of participation in the sacraments without which one could not ordinarily expect salvation.

15. ET J.B. Morris, NPNF xiii (2nd series), p. 232.

16. ET H. Burgess, Select Metrical Hymns and Homilies of Ephraem Syrus (London, 1853), p. 41.

17. ET H. Burgess, ibid., p. 80.

The frequency with which Ephrem speaks of the sacraments and sees sacramental symbolism throughout the Scriptures as well as his specific assertions of their efficacy for eternal life point to their importance in his eyes and the weight that he gave to the words of Christ in the discourse in John vi as teaching about the eucharist.

VI. FOURTH CENTURY EASTERN AUTHORS

Athanasius

F.L. Cross characterised Athanasius as "a theologian of the market-place rather than the study" who wrote "not to clarify inner perplexities ... but in response to pressing external needs."¹ Although there are extant fragments of commentaries attributed to him on the Psalms, Song of Songs, Mark and Luke, the bulk of the writings from his hand that we possess were written in response to the duties and problems he encountered during a long life as bishop of the important see of Alexandria.

Much of his work was concerned with the refutation of the Arian heresy. In it he maintained that Arian doctrines were based on a mistaken method of interpreting Scripture. In contrast to the practice of using only a few isolated texts understood not in their context nor in accordance with the general trend of Scripture but only in the light of Arian presuppositions, he placed what he considered to be the true and sound approach to exegesis, (Ad Episc. Aeg. 3.4, PG XXV.544f; Or. Con. Arianos I.52, PG XXVI.120f). He believed all matters concerning the context of a passage were necessary to a proper understanding of its meaning for he says:

It is right and necessary as in all divine Scripture, so here, faithfully to expound the time of which the apostle wrote, and the person and the point, lest the reader from ignorance missing either these or any similar particular, may be wide of the true sense.
(Or. Con. Arianos I.54, PG XXVI.124)

1. F.L. Cross, The Study of Athanasius (Oxford, 1945), p. 5.

But Scripture is not necessarily to be understood literally.

What is said in proverbs is not said plainly, but
is put forth latently as the Lord himself has
taught us in the Gospel according to John (xvi.25).

(Or. Con. Arianos II.44, PG XXVI.241)

Any particular passage ought to be interpreted in accordance with the general teaching of Scripture as a whole, what he calls the *σκοπός* of Scripture (Or. Con. Arianos III.28f, PG XXVI.385). In another place he speaks of "the ecclesiastical *σκοπός* as an anchor for the faith" (Or. Con. Arianos III.58, PG XXVI.445). The phrase seems to have a meaning very close to what other writers referred to as the rule of faith as a guide in interpretation. Scripture was the authority to which he continually referred and by which he judged the doctrines of his adversaries. Addressing them he said: "If you deny those things which are written then you can no longer be called Christians" (Ad Serap. IV.2, PG XXVI.640; cf De Decretis 15, PG XXV.449).

The portions of Scripture most employed by the Arians to support their teachings about Christ's person and his relationship with the Father were taken from the Fourth Gospel. In opposing them Athanasius also made extensive use of John. Against the passages they interpreted as proving Christ to be a creature, subordinate to the Father, and inferior to him in time, Athanasius set those which spoke of him as divine, pre-existent and equal in power and glory with the Father. He reinterpreted the verses on which their teaching was based in the light of these and other passages. In the course of his argument he was able to use some portions of the teaching in the sixth chapter of John, chiefly as proof texts or supporting evidence in the exegesis of other passages.

The Arians had apparently denied the identity of the Logos and the Son. Athanasius takes them to mean that there are two *λόγοι*, that which is the attribute of God and the Son who is only nominally Logos. But Athanasius cannot find such an idea anywhere in Scripture. It speaks certainly of words of God but they are merely his precepts or commands to men. Christ makes clear the distinction between them and the Word who is Son of God when he says, "The words which I have spoken to you" (Jn vi.63; Or. Con. Arianos II.39, PG XXVI.229).

He contrasts the manner in which Jesus speaks of his Godhead with the way he speaks of his manhood. Of the former he speaks absolutely

not setting down in every case the reason nor the wherefore lest he should seem second to those things for which he was made. For that reason would of necessity take precedence of him without which not even he himself had come into being ... but the Lord, not being made subordinate to any reason why he should be Word save only that he is the Father's offspring and only-begotten Wisdom, when he becomes man then assigns the reason *why* he is about to take flesh. For the need of man preceded his becoming man, apart from which he had not put on flesh.

(Or. Con. Arianos II.54, PG XXVI.261)

He then indicates the need of man for which the incarnation took place by quoting John vi.38-40 and several other Johannine verses (Jn xii.46, xviii.37; I Jn iii.8) completing the passage with a short summary of the reasons for Christ's coming derived from these passages: "To give a witness then, and for our sakes to undergo death, to raise man up and destroy the works of the devil, the Saviour came and this is the reason of his incarnate presence" (Or. Con. Arianos II.55, PG XXVI.261f). The idea here expressed was a fundamental part of Athanasius' understanding of Jesus and his work. The same view had been put forth in his treatise

De Incarnatione Verbi Dei. The purpose of his writing, he states, is "that you may know that the reason of his coming down was because of us and that our transgressions called forth the loving-kindness of the Word" (De Inc. Verbi Dei 4, PG XXV.104).

John vi.38 was again used among other verses in controversy with the Arians to show that when speaking of his Godhead Christ was not as they claimed in rivalry and revolt against the Father as Absalom against David, but that there was perfect harmony and agreement between them (Or. Con. Arianos III.7, PG XXVI.333f).

Athanasius shows that Christ's questioning, as when he inquired of his disciples concerning the loaves, was not from ignorance, for the evangelist explains, "This he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do" (Jn vi.6). From this instance he interprets other occasions of Jesus' questioning. However, if this explanation will not satisfy the Arians, then, he says, they should understand that ignorance is proper to the flesh but not to the Godhead (Or. Con. Arianos III.37, PG XXVI.401f).

As bishop of Alexandria it was the duty of Athanasius to see that the correct dates of Easter and the Lenten fast, as calculated in Egypt, were made known by circular letter to the principal churches of the Christian world. These festal letters provided Athanasius with an opportunity for teaching on the nature and purpose of fast and feast.

In the first of these letters he reminds believers that a fast ought not to be one of the body only but also of the soul, for he says:

Virtues and vices are the food of the soul
and it can eat either of these two meats and
incline to either of the two according to its
own will ... As our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ, being heavenly bread, is the food of the saints according to this: Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood (Jn vi.53), so is the devil the food of the impure and of those who do nothing which is of the light but work the deeds of darkness. Therefore, in order to withdraw and turn them from vices, he enjoins upon them as sustenance the food of virtue. Now this is humbleness of mind, lowliness to endure humiliation, the acknowledgement of God.

(Festal Letters I.5)²

This passage recalls the passage in Origen where he had remarked that as Christ is living bread so his enemy death is dead bread and that the soul feeds on one or the other in accordance with the opinions, good or bad, which it entertains (Origen, Comm. in Matt. xii.33, GCS 10, p. 144f). The metaphor, however, is not identical and Athanasius' emphasis is on deeds rather than on knowledge and opinions, though not entirely so, for he continues: "The looking to God, and the Word which proceeds from him, suffice to nourish those who hear and stand to them in place of all food" (Festal Letters I.6).

A similar thought, though more extended, appears in the seventh festal letter.

(God) by his living Word quickens all men and gives him to be food and life to the saints, as the Lord declares, "I am the bread of life." The Jews, because they were weak in perception and had not exercised the senses of the soul in virtue and did not comprehend this discourse about bread, murmured against him because he said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven and gives life to men." For sin has her own special bread of her death and calling to those who are pleasure lovers and lack understanding, she says, "Touch with delight secret bread and sweet waters which are stolen" (Prov. ix.17) ... The end of that food is not pleasant as the Wisdom of God says again, "Bread of deceit is pleasant to a man but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel" (Prov. xx.17).

(Festal Letters VII.4.5)³

2. ET H. Burgess, rev. Miss Payne Smith, NPNF iv (2nd Series), 1892, p. 508.

3. ET, ibid., p. 525.

Athanasius goes on to speak of the banquet that is prepared for the saints by Wisdom, Prov. ix.1-5, a passage interpreted by earlier writers as prophetic of the eucharist, and continues:

For the bread of Wisdom is living fruit, as the Lord said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever" (Jn vi.51) ... Now wicked men hunger for bread like this ... but the righteous alone, being prepared, shall be satisfied ... Let us be nourished with living bread, by faith and love to God, knowing that without faith it is impossible to be partakers of such bread as this ... (Our Saviour) continually nourished his believing disciples with his words and gave them life by the nearness of his divinity ... And not here only, my brethren, is this bread the food of the righteous, neither are the saints on earth alone nourished by such bread and such blood, but we also eat them in heaven, for the Lord is the food even of the exalted spirits and the angels.

(Festal Letters VII.5-8)⁴

Then quoting Christ's promise to his disciples of a place at his heavenly banquet (Lk xxii.29f) he exclaims:

Oh what a banquet is this, my brethren, and how great is the harmony and gladness of those who eat at this heavenly table! For they delight themselves not with that food which is cast out but with that which produces life everlasting.

(Festal Letters VII.8)⁵

The parable of the prodigal son is made the basis of an appeal to all to return and repent.

For he promises saying, "I am the Bread of life; he that comes to me shall not hunger and he that believes on me shall never thirst" (Jn vi.35). We too shall be counted worthy of these things, if at all times we cleave to our Saviour and if we are pure, not only in these six days of Easter, but consider the whole course of our life as a feast and continue near and do not go far off, saying to him, "You have the words of eternal life and whither shall we go?"

(Festal Letters VII.10)⁶

4. ET, ibid., p. 525f.

5. ET, ibid., p. 526.

6. ET, ibid., p. 527.

These passages also contain echoes of Origen (De Princ. II.11.3, GCS 5, p.186; Contra Celsum VIII.22, GCS 2, p.239). In his tenth festal letter Athanasius again speaks of the heavenly banquet as a feast upon Christ by comparing Dives and Lazarus. He says of the latter;

Having hungered for bread ground from corn, he was there satisfied with that which is better than manna, even the Lord who came down and said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven and gives life to mankind" (Jn vi.51). 7
(Festal Letters X.6)

These words come at the close of a passage that contrasts the lot of men here with their condition hereafter, the divine feast being represented as the reward of those who have suffered affliction and persecution. At the time of writing Athanasius is thought to have just completed a period of exile in southern France.

In all these passages Athanasius does not relate the Johannine discourse specifically to the eucharist but treats it in the more allegorical Alexandrian tradition as speaking of teaching and of the future life in heaven. In the fourth letter to Serapion, the Bishop of Thmuis, Athanasius attempts to interpret what Jesus says of his flesh and blood and in this case he appears to allude more definitely to the eucharistic feeding on Christ. Speaking of the way Christ made reference both to his humanity and divinity by the use of the terms 'Son of man' and Spirit' Athanasius writes:

But I have seen this characteristic also in the Gospel according to John, when the Lord, discoursing about the eating of his body and having seen many scandalized on this account, said, "Does this scandalize you? What if you see the Son of man ascend where he was before? The Spirit is the life-giver, the flesh is of no avail" (Jn vi.62f). For here also he said both things about

7. ET, ibid., p. 530.

himself, flesh and spirit. And he distinguished the Spirit from what is according to flesh that, believing not only in what is seen but also in what is not seen in him, they might learn that what he says is not fleshly but spiritual. For how many would the body suffice for food, that it might also become food for the whole world? But on this account he mentioned the ascending of the Son of man into heaven in order that he might draw them away from carnal thoughts and afterwards they might learn that the flesh spoken of was heavenly food from above and spiritual food given by him. "For", he said, "what I have said to you is spirit and life." It is the same as saying what is exhibited and given for the salvation of the world is the flesh which I wear. But this and the blood of it will be given to you by me spiritually as food in order that this may be imparted spiritually to each and become for all a safeguard to the resurrection of eternal life.

(Ad Serap. IV.19, PG xxvi.665,668)

Athanasius' purpose was to maintain the presence of both the divine and the human in Christ. He takes the words of Christ in verse 63 as teaching this duality of his person. The terms flesh and spirit are understood not in a general sense but with reference specifically to Christ's flesh and spirit. Having shown that both have their part in his person, he goes on to stress the spiritual. The flesh spoken of is heavenly and spiritual food. He does not refer to the eucharist by name but passes into expressions which seem to suggest that it has become the focus of his thought. But what he says is not unambiguous. "What is exhibited and given for the salvation of the world" could be either Christ's body raised upon the cross or the elements standing upon the altar at communion. The last sentence of the quotation seems to speak of the distribution of the elements at the eucharist. If it does, the word *φυλακτήριον* suggests the conception of the eucharistic bread as a kind of protective charm.⁸ W.C. De Pauley uses the term "pre-

8. C. Hebert, op. cit., p. 156.

servative".⁹ Bettenson translates it "safeguard" and places the passage under the general heading of "The Eucharist."¹⁰ He renders the phrase τῆς σωματικῆς ἐννοίᾳς as "the material notion" which may suggest the view that Athanasius wished to draw his readers' thoughts away from the material bread. Batiffol, on the other hand, commenting on the phrase ἡ σὰρξ ἣν ἐγὼ φορῶ says "la nourriture eucharistique est la chair historique du Christ, mais cette chair est donnée dans l'eucharistie πνευματικῶς."¹¹

Lebon's note on this passage reads:

Il est à peine besoin de faire remarquer que cette explication n'inclut pas la négation de la présence réelle de la vraie chair du Christ dans l'eucharistie. Saint Athanase ne se préoccupe que de confirmer que le Seigneur a pu s'appeler "L'Esprit" aussi bien que "le Fils de l'homme". Bien que vraiment présente et reçue dans l'eucharistie, la chair du Christ ne nourrit pas le corps du communiant, à la manière d'un aliment matériel, mais son âme, par l'effet de la divinité présente en elle et qui est l'Esprit. C'est ainsi qu'elle peut être appelée un aliment céleste venu d'en haut, une nourriture spirituelle, spirituellement donnée et distribuée en vue de la vie éternelle. 12

When one considers what follows this passage in Athanasius it becomes clear that his concern throughout has been the affirmation of the human and divine in Christ, but especially so as he appeared in the incarnation,

9. W.C. De Pauley, "The Idea of Man in Athanasius" Theology 12, 1926, 338.

10. H. Bettenson, The Early Christian Fathers (London, 1969), p. 299.

11. P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 323.

12. J. Lebon, Lettres à Sérapion sur la Divinité du Saint-Esprit, SC 15 (Paris, 1947), p. 204.

during his life on earth, for he goes on to speak immediately of Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman, "God is spirit" (Jn iv.24), "that she might no longer think of God in a bodily way but spiritually" (Ad Serap. IV.19, PG xxvi.668). He adds a quotation from the prophets: "The Spirit of our face, Christ the Lord" (Lam. iv.20 LXX) lest anyone from his outward appearance should think Christ was only a man but might know by the term Spirit that God was in his body.

Athanasius is not so much interested in stating any particular conception of the eucharistic body, as he is concerned about a right understanding of the incarnate Word. He does not deny the real presence, as understood by Lebon, but neither does he affirm it. As Batiffol admits,¹³ we know very little of the eucharistic teaching of Athanasius. It cannot be said that the present passage gives us any clear idea on the subject. It is introduced too incidentally, too casually, to be taken as a statement of doctrine. The emphasis of the context is to affirm the divinity of Christ as against those who might regard him as man only. Except for whatever inferences may be placed on the term *φυλακτήριον*, his references to the eucharist are rather simply to assert that it is spiritual food. The last phrase of the quotation may suggest that it was coming to be regarded as possessing some almost magical power to assure eternal life. That conception, however, may be placing too much significance on one word.

In Athanasius we find the Fourth Gospel, including the chapter we are examining, used as his chief scriptural support in the Arian controversy. He continues the Alexandrian spiritualizing exegesis though to

13. P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 324.

a lesser extent than Origen with whom he shows some affinities in his interpretations.

Cyril of Jerusalem

The only use of John vi by Cyril of Jerusalem is in connection with eucharistic teaching. The earliest examples of systematic instruction on eucharistic doctrine which we possess are the addresses to the newly-baptized attributed to Cyril and to Ambrose of Milan. Both works were composed during the course of the fourth century when the Church was receiving a greater degree of imperial favour and the number of candidates for baptism had considerably increased.

According to the Church's practice at that time the explanation of the full meaning of baptism and eucharist was postponed until the believer had participated in the rites for the first time. Baptisms customarily took place at Easter after a course of lectures on doctrine throughout the Lenten season. During the week following Easter the bishop delivered his addresses on the significance of the 'mysteries'. The sacred rites, at which only the faithful were present, and what they signified were not to be divulged to outsiders. It is no doubt due to this secrecy that so few treatises on those themes have survived from the period of the early Church.

At the close of the introductory lecture in the series delivered by Cyril during Lent there is appended a note by those who took them down, reading:

You may give these catechetical lectures to φωτιζόμενοι in preparation for baptism, to read, and to believers who have already received the sacrament of the font. Do not give them, under any circumstances, to catechumens or to any other persons not actually Christian, as you

shall answer to the Lord. And, as in the sight of the Lord, you shall transcribe this note before any copy that you make of the lectures.

(Procatechesis: ad lectorem, PG XXXIII.365)¹⁴

Telfer remarks that this note is a clear indication that the transcribers did not include the post-baptismal lectures on the mysteries, for they were not intended even for the *φωτιζόμενοι* before their baptism.¹⁵ Most manuscripts of the lectures, however, contain five lectures on the sacraments which were for long regarded as the work of Cyril but in more recent times have been held by some critics to be by a later writer. Telfer, following the argument of Swaans, thinks that these lectures are the work of John, Cyril's successor in the episcopate at Jerusalem. In some of the manuscripts John is mentioned as their author or co-author with Cyril. Telfer supposes that the transcription of the prebaptismal catecheses took place at the time they were first delivered about the year 350 but that by the 390s it was desired to complete the series of discourses by the addition of those on the sacraments and that this was done by copying out the course as delivered by John. Confusion of authorship resulted from their being combined in the same manuscript but not always with a note regarding their true author.¹⁶ Telfer believes, nevertheless, that Cyril "laid the whole foundation for a baptismal catechesis that was to be one of the chief glories of the Church of Jerusalem."¹⁷ John in all probability followed closely the

14. ET as in Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesis of Emesa, LCC Vol. iv, W. Telfer, ed., (London, 1955), p. 76.

15. W. Telfer, ibid., p. 39.

16. Ibid., p. 40.

17. Ibid., p. 43.

pattern Cyril had set in his discourses on the sacraments.

F.L. Cross, on the other hand, is unconvinced by these arguments, supporting Cyril's authorship chiefly on the grounds of certain cross-references between the two series of discourses.¹⁸ Since it was evidently the custom in Jerusalem to give a course of lectures both before and after the baptism of believers, the intimation that a second series is to come or reference to the one previously delivered does not in itself constitute any evidence for common authorship. Even the correspondence of the content of the five lectures on the mysteries to what is promised by Cyril in the earlier series adds very little weight to Cross's contention, for the lectures on the sacraments must necessarily cover the main points of doctrine connected with them as specified by Cyril in advance (Cat. XVIII.33, PG XXXIII.1056), whether composed by Cyril or by John. In any case there is the discrepancy that we have only five lectures on the mysteries whereas one for each day of the week was promised (*καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν ἐν ταῖς ἑξῆς τῆς ἑβδομάδος ἡμέραις*; Cat. XVIII.33, PG XXXIII.1056) and the intimation that the giving of the Spirit by the laying on of hands will be explained in due course is not fulfilled (Cat. XVI.26, PG XXXIII.956).

Quasten and Piédagnel set forth the arguments on both sides of the question but without expressing a definite judgment between them, preferring to hold the authorship as unproven either way.¹⁹ The matter appears to be inconclusive in the present state of the evidence.

18. F.L. Cross, St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments (London, 1951), p. xxxviiiif.

19. J. Quasten, Patrology Vol. III, (Westminster Md., 1940), p. 366;
A. Piédagnel, Catéchèses Mystagogiques, SC 126 (Paris, 1966), p. 38.

One may, however, regard the doctrine contained in the catechetical and mystagogic lectures as representing accurately the teaching of the Church at Jerusalem during the latter half of the fourth century under the two bishops, Cyril and John.

In Lecture xvi Cyril deals with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Since the word spirit (πνεῦμα) is used in the Scriptures with a variety of meanings he wishes to distinguish its use for the third person of the Trinity from other ways in which it is employed. He says:

But since concerning spirit in general many diverse things are written in the divine Scriptures, and there is fear lest some out of ignorance fall into confusion, not knowing to what sort of spirit the writing refers, it is well now to certify you of what kind the Scripture declares the Holy Spirit to be.

(Cat. XVI.13, PG XXXIII.936)

He then lists a number of different things all called in one text or another by the name spirit: an angel, the soul, the wind, virtue, impure practice, even a devil. Examples are given among which we find one taken from John vi.

And of good doctrine the Lord himself says, 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life,' (Jn. vi.63), instead of 'are spiritual.' But the Holy Spirit is not pronounced by the tongue, but he is a living spirit who gives wisdom of speech, himself speaking and discoursing.

(Cat. XVI.13, PG XXXIII.937)

A number of instances are given in which the scriptural writers represent the Spirit as speaking and directing the prophets and apostles in their work. Cyril then concludes his comments on the verse with the explanation:

Now I have spoken these things to you because of the text 'The words which I have spoken to you are spirit', that you may understand this not of the utterance of the lips but of the good doctrine in this passage.

(Cat. XVI.14, PG XXXIII.937)

The passage is evidence of Cyril's concern that his audience should understand the exact meaning of a text. He had said at an earlier point in his discourse, "The Holy Spirit himself spoke the Scriptures" (Cat. XVI.2, PG XXXIII.920). It would seem that he wished to assert a belief in the Holy Spirit as a living person so that his hearers might not make the mistake of equating Him with anything so ephemeral as words, even those spoken by the Lord himself, or with anything as abstract as the doctrine they expressed. He specifies therefore that this saying of Jesus is not to be interpreted as referring to the Holy Spirit, as the third member of the Trinity, but merely to the spiritual or divine character of the teaching Jesus has given. Spirit in this case means simply 'spiritual'.

The way he interpreted the teaching itself is to be found in the fourth of the mystagogic lectures where he deals with the body and blood of Christ. A quotation of John vi.53 shows that this passage was being used as a source of eucharistic doctrine in a most literal way. A rather extended quotation is necessary.

Even of itself the teaching of the blessed Paul is sufficient to give you a full assurance concerning those divine mysteries, of which having been deemed worthy, you are become of the same body and blood with Christ. For you have just heard him say distinctly ... (I Cor. xi.23-25, most of which is quoted). Since then he himself declared and said of the bread 'This is my body', who shall dare to doubt any longer? And since he has himself affirmed and said 'This is my blood', who shall ever hesitate, saying that it is not his blood? He once in Cana of Galilee turned the water into wine, akin to blood, and is it incredible that he should have turned wine into blood? When called to a bodily marriage he miraculously wrought that wonderful work and on the children of the bride-chamber shall he not much rather be acknowledged to have bestowed the fruition of his body and blood? Wherefore with full assurance let us partake as of the body and blood of Christ, for in the figure (ἐν τύπῳ) of bread is given to you his body and in the figure of wine his blood, that you by partaking of

the body and blood of Christ may be made of the same body and the same blood with him. For thus we come to bear Christ in us because his body and blood are distributed through our members. Thus it is that according to the blessed Peter we become partakers of the divine nature. Christ on a certain occasion, discoursing with the Jews, said, 'Except you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no life in you' (Jn vi.53). They, not having heard his saying in a spiritual sense, were offended and went back, supposing that he was inviting them to eat flesh. In the Old Testament also there was showbread, but this as it belonged to the Old Testament has come to an end. But in the New Testament there is bread of heaven and a cup of salvation sanctifying soul and body for as the bread corresponds to our body so is the Word appropriate to our soul. Consider, therefore, the bread and the wine not as bare elements for they are according to the Lord's declaration the body and blood of Christ, for even though sense suggests this to you, yet let faith establish you. Judge not the matter from the taste, but from faith be fully assured without misgiving that the body and blood of Christ have been granted to you ... Having learnt these things and been fully assured that the seeming bread is not bread, though sensible to taste, but the body of Christ, and that the seeming wine is not wine, though the taste will have it so, but the blood of Christ, and that of this David sung of old, saying, 'And bread strengthens man's heart to make his face to shine with oil', strengthen your heart by partaking thereof as spiritual and make the face of your soul to shine.

(Cat.Myst. IV.1-6,9, PG XXXIII.1097-1101, 1104)

Then having sanctified ourselves by these spiritual hymns, we beseech the merciful God to send forth his Holy Spirit upon the gifts lying before him, that he may make the bread the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ for whatever the Holy Spirit has touched is surely sanctified and changed.

(Cat.Myst. V.7, PG XXXIII.1113f)

We are confronted here with a much more developed doctrine than we have encountered in earlier writers with regard to the relationship between the elements of the sacrament and the body and blood of the Lord. No longer are the words of Christ merely repeated without any attempt at explanation. The belief that a miraculous change in them is effected

during the rite is stated unequivocally and likened to the change from water to wine at Cana. Bettenson has said that "in Cyril's lectures to the newly baptized we find the first clear teaching of a 'conversion' of the bread and wine of the Eucharist into the Body and Blood of Christ."²⁰ F.L. Cross also writes: "He is the first theologian to interpret the Lord's presence in conversionist language."²¹

The agent of the change is identified as the Holy Spirit at the invocation of the priest, or perhaps of the whole assembly since the plural is used (V.7). At IV.2, however, it would appear that Christ himself effects the change, so that some ambiguity exists as to the person of the Trinity involved. In the first lecture on the mysteries Cyril had included the whole Trinity in the invocation over bread and wine (Cat.Myst. I.7, PG XXXIII.1072).

We may detect that not all the people accepted the teaching uncritically in the reiterated assertion that they ought not to judge by taste but to rely upon faith (Cat. Myst. IV.6, 9, V.20, PG XXXIII.1101, 1104, 1123). The materialistic nature of the writer's line of thought is emphasized by the statement that it is because of the body and blood eaten and so 'distributed through our members' that believers become incorporated into Christ (IV.3). The spiritual element in the sacrament, though not omitted, is accorded less prominence. In IV.5 there is reference to the sanctification of both soul and body. The bread, the material element, is related to the body as the Incarnate Word is to the

20. H. Bettenson, ed. & tr., The Later Christian Fathers (London, 1970), p. 4.

21. F.L. Cross, St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Lectures on the Christian Sacraments, p. xxxii.

soul. The use of the word *τύπος* in IV.3 cannot be held to lessen to any great extent the materialistic orientation of the whole passage. It may be taken as referring to the outward appearance only as apprehended by the senses whose judgment must be corrected by the believer's faith.

It is perhaps worthy of note that he uses the word 'body' throughout except in the quotation of verse 53 and in referring to the Jews' mistakenly literal interpretation of Jesus' words. Whether this reflects a distinction of meaning for Cyril that would affect his interpretation of the verse and its application to his doctrine of the sacrament is problematical.

Irenaeus had given some indication of a belief in a change in the bread and wine associated with what was said over them (Adv. Haer. IV. xviii.5; V.ii.3), but is by no means so clear and explicit as Cyril. He shows, however, that the idea is not new with Cyril. What appears for the first time is the explicit way in which it is defined with the implication that any other view should not be tolerated.

We cannot know how explicitly the doctrine was stated to newly baptized at an earlier period, but it is evident that the Church at Jerusalem during the fourth century was teaching a change in the bread and wine into the flesh and blood of Christ at the invocation of the Holy Spirit and was drawing upon the discourse in John's Gospel in its affirmation of this.

The Cappadocian Fathers: Basil the Great

Basil did not allow his busy life as the administrator of the diocese of Caesarea to keep him from a constant study of the Scriptures. He himself assiduously followed the advice he offered to his friend Gregory:

The study of inspired Scripture is the chief way of finding our duty for in it we find both instruction about conduct and the lives of blessed men delivered in writing as some breathing images of godly living for the imitation of their good works.

(Epis. ii.3, PG XXXII.228)

As a man of action whose great concern was the pastoral oversight of those entrusted to his care his writings are of a more practical nature than those of the other two great Cappadocian fathers. It is in his sermons, letters, moral and ascetic works rather than in commentaries and treatises that his Biblical exegesis is chiefly to be found.²²

In his sermons on the creation his preference for a plain and literal interpretation of the text is clearly stated:

I know the laws of allegory, though less by myself than from the works of others. There are those truly who do not admit the common sense of the Scriptures, for whom water is not water, but some other nature, who see in a plant, in a fish, what their fancy wishes, who change the nature of reptiles and wild beasts to suit their allegories, like the interpreters of dreams who explain visions in sleep to make them serve their own ends. For me grass is grass; plant, fish, wild beast, domestic animal, I take all in the literal sense. 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel.'

(Hom. in Hex. ix.1, PG XXIX.188)

Basil put his study of Scripture to a very practical use in the composition of rules for those who followed the ascetic life. The

22. J. Quasten, Patrology Vol. III (Westminster Md., 1940), p. 216.

Moralia, written while he was living in a monastic retreat in Pontus, were composed with the assistance of his great friend Gregory of Nazianzus.²³ As in his other works on ethics, his Longer and Shorter Rules, each precept is supported by Scripture. The Bible was thus for Basil the foundation of the ascetic life of the monasteries which he founded and encouraged. From the injunction or regulation for which a text is cited, some indication of the manner in which Basil understood the meaning of the text itself may be formed.

Those from the sixth chapter of John's Gospel are concerned with hospitality and obedience within the monastic community. A Christian ought to receive his brethren hospitably, without disturbance and with frugality. The reception and feeding of the five thousand by Jesus (Jn vi.8-11) is cited along with Luke x.38-42 (Moralia XXXVIII, PG XXXI.757). Thus we see that the miraculous feature of the incident appears of less concern to Basil than the compassion shown in not sending the multitude away hungry, the element which could best be used for a lesson in daily living. If someone should wish to sojourn among the monks for a short time only, he is to be admitted, for "him who comes to me I will not cast out" (Jn vi.37). There is always the possibility that having seen the monks' manner of life, he will wish to remain and join the brotherhood (Reg. Brev. XCVII, PG XXXI.1149). No opportunity for evangelism should be neglected. Again compassion may be an element in Basil's setting down of this regulation.

23. Ibid., p. 211.

Each monastery had one monk at its head and great stress is laid on the need for obedience to this superior. The monks are represented as inquiring:

We beg to be instructed from the Scriptures if it is necessary to cast out those who leave the brotherhood and wish to live a solitary life or along with a few to pursue the same end of devotion.

Basil replies:

As the Lord often said: 'The Son does nothing by himself' (Jn v.19) and 'I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the Father who sent me' (Jn vi.38) and as the Apostle testifies: 'The desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit against the flesh and these fight against each other so that we do not do what we wish' (Gal. v.17), everything that is according to one's own will is foreign to those who serve God.

(Reg. Brev. LXXIV, PG XXXI.1133)

And again, with respect to a brother's choosing to abstain for a time from some food or drink, the same verse from John vi is cited with the comment, "Every judgement of one's own will is dangerous" (Reg. Brev. CXXXVII, PG XXXI.1173). It is not the part of a brother to pry curiously into the reasons behind his superior's commands (Reg. Fus. XLVIII, PG XXXI.1037). Even if some are offended, the brethren must show themselves constant to the will of God. Among other passages in support of this principle, is mentioned the defection of some of Jesus' disciples when he said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (Jn vi.66, Moralia XXXIII.5, PG XXXI.753).

In the Moralia Basil devotes a section, divided into thirty-seven heads, to the duties of one placed over others as a pastor. John vi.37, 38, 40 are used to press home the warning that such a person must not

be concerned with his own achievements but make it his special care to see that those entrusted to him may grow in grace. Jesus is frequently set before the Christian as a pattern of the good pastor (Moralia LXX.11, PG XXXI.825).

Basil produced two treatises directed against Arian teaching. The doctrine he expounded in De Spiritu Sancto was used by Ambrose of Milan as a source in the composition of his own writings on the same theme and so became part of the western teaching on the Holy Spirit.²⁴ In that work Basil employed verse 63 of John's sixth chapter in a paragraph devoted to asserting the divinity of the Spirit against the Arian teaching that he was a created being. Of the qualities the Spirit shares by nature with the Father and the Son is that of giving life.

And the Lord bears witness that 'it is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh is of no avail'. How then shall we alienate the Spirit from his quickening power and make him belong to lifeless nature? Who is so contentious, who is so utterly without the heavenly gift and unfed by God's good words, who is so devoid of part and lot in eternal hopes, as to sever the Spirit from the Godhead and rank him with the creature?

(De Spiritu Sancto 56, PG XXXII.173)

That verse must have formed one of Basil's standard texts on the subject for in a letter inscribed to Eupaterius and his daughter he again alludes to it in a similar context.

All who call the Holy Spirit a creature we pity on the ground that by this utterance they are falling into the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against him. I need use no argument to prove to those who are even slightly trained in Scripture that the creature is separated from the Godhead. The creature is a slave but the Spirit sets free. The creature needs life but the Spirit is the giver of life (τὸ ζωοποιεῖν, cf Jn vi.63). The creature requires teaching. It is the Spirit that teaches.

(Epis. clix.2; PG XXXII.621)

24. Ibid., p. 210.

In two references to the eucharist Basil draws upon the words of the discourse in John vi, but in such a way that very little may be deduced about the import of the words for him. In them he offers no theory of the manner of Christ's presence in the sacrament. Regula XXI of the Moralia merely states the necessity for eternal life of participation in the body and blood of Christ and appends verses 53 and 54. Basil then warns that no profit accrues to him who comes to that participation without an understanding of the manner in which it is given; he who participates unworthily is condemned. Again verse 53 is cited, followed by 62, 63 and I Corinthians xi.27-29. The manner of the participation is "in commemoration of the Lord's obedience unto death" that those who live may not henceforth live to themselves but to him who died for them and rose again (II Cor. v.15; Moralia XXI, PG XXXI.738f). This scarcely warrants the assumption that for Basil the sacrament was a memorial only.

In Epistle xciii Basil advocates frequent communion and witnesses to the custom of reservation of the elements by the communicant for later private consumption at home.

It is good and beneficial to communicate every day and to partake of the holy body and blood of Christ. For he distinctly says, 'He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.' And who doubts that to share frequently in life is the same thing as to have abundant life . . . It is needless to point out that for anyone in times of persecution to be compelled to take the communion in his own hand without the presence of priest or minister is not a serious offence as long custom sanctions this practice from the facts themselves. And at Alexandria and in Egypt each one of the laity for the most part keeps the communion at his own house and participates in it when he likes. For when once the priest has completed the offering and given it, the recipient participating in it each time as entire is

bound to believe that he properly takes and receives it from the giver. And even in the Church, when the priest gives the portion, the recipient takes it with complete power over it and so lifts it to his lips with his own hand. It has the same validity whether one portion or several portions are received from the priest at the same time.

(Epis. xciii, PG XXXII.484f)

The above would seem to indicate that whatever effect the priest's offering had upon the elements was permanent, since they did not revert to common bread and wine again at the conclusion of the sacramental ritual. When the communicant partook of them privately at home, he was still partaking of "the holy body and blood of Christ."

In one of his homilies on the psalms Basil speaks of the bread of life as the word of life which nourishes the inner man. No reference to the sacrament appears to be intended. He writes:

'His praise shall continually be in my mouth.'
The prophet seems to promise something impossible. For how can God's praise be continually in a man's mouth? When he is conversing about the customary things pertaining to life, he does not have the praise of God in his mouth. When he is sleeping, he will be silent altogether. And how when eating and drinking does the mouth produce praise? To this we say that there is also a spiritual (νοητὸν) mouth of the inner man, by which he is fed by receiving the word of life, which is the bread which has come down from heaven.

(Hom. in Ps. xxxiii, PG XXIX.353)

Basil was an admirer of Origen and along with Gregory of Nazianzus compiled an anthology of his works.²⁵ He did not go all the way with him, however, in his tendency to allegorize the Scriptures.

25. B. Altaner, Patrology, ET H.C. Graef (Edinburgh, 1960), pp. 225, 336.

In Letter viii, addressed to the Caesareans as a defence of his withdrawal and on the faith, there is a passage which interprets John vi.57, treating the eating and drinking in a manner very like Origen's spiritualizing exegesis. The letter, however, has been judged to be unauthentic, although in the past it has been used to determine points of Basil's theology. Quasten assigns it to Evagrius Ponticus on the authority of Bousset and Melcher.²⁶ Bettenson prints the passage in question under Basil's eucharistic doctrine but notes its doubtful authorship.²⁷ Batiffol treats it as Basil's work though, of course, does not regard it as concerned with the eucharist.²⁸ The passage reads:

'He that eats me,' he says, 'he also shall live because of me', for we eat his flesh and drink his blood, being made through his incarnation and his visible life partakers of his word and of his wisdom. For all his mystic sojourn among us he called flesh and blood and set forth the teaching consisting of practical science, of physics and of theology whereby our soul is nourished and is meanwhile trained for the contemplation of actual realities. This is perhaps the intended meaning of what he says.

(Epis. viii.4, PG XXXII.253)

Even though this passage cannot be claimed for Basil, it is evidence that in the age when many were giving a very literal and realistic interpretation to these words, there were others who saw in them quite another meaning.

Gregory of Nazianzus

Basil's friend, Gregory of Nazianzus, does not seem to have used the discourse in John vi to any great extent in his extant works. In a

26. J. Quasten, Patrology Vol. III, pp. 176, 224.

27. H. Bettenson, The Later Christian Fathers (London, 1970), p. 83.

28. P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 394.

series of orations he refutes the Eunomians, a branch of the Arians who held that the Son, as begotten, and so of a different nature from the Father, was created but adopted as Son from the beginning.²⁹ In his fourth theological oration, in which he deals with texts misinterpreted by the Arians, he supports the equality of Father and Son.

All things that the Father has are the Son's, and on the other hand, all that belongs to the Son is the Father's. Nothing then is peculiar, because all things are in common. For their being itself is common and equal, even though the Son receive it from the Father. It is in respect of this that it is said 'I live by the Father' (Jn vi.57); not as though his life and being were kept together by the Father, but because he has his being from him beyond all time and beyond all cause. But how does he see the Father doing and do likewise? Is it like those who copy pictures and letters because they cannot attain the truth unless by looking at the original and being led by the hand by it? ... What an absurdity! He cleanses lepers ... and walks upon the sea and does all his other works, but in what case or when did the Father do these acts before him? Is it not clear that the Father impressed the ideas of these same actions and the Word brings them to pass, yet not in slavish or unskilful fashion but with full knowledge and in a masterly way, or to speak more properly, like the Father? For in this sense I understand the words that whatever is done by the Father, these things the Son does likewise, not, that is, because of the likeness of the things done, but in respect of the authority.

(Ora. XXX.11, PG XXXVI.116f)

Let them quote in the seventh place that the Son came down from heaven not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. Well, if this had not been said by himself who came down, we should say that the phrase was modelled as issuing from the human nature, not from him who is conceived of in his character as the Saviour, for his human will cannot be opposed to God, seeing it is altogether taken into God; but conceived of simply as in our nature, inasmuch as the human will does not completely follow the divine, but for the most part struggles against and resists it ... But, since as this is the language of him who

29. J. Quasten, Patrology Vol. III, p. 308.

assumed our nature (for he it was who came down) and not of the nature which he assumed, we must meet the objection in this way, that the passage does not mean that the Son has a special will of his own, besides that of the Father, but that he has not. So that the meaning would be, 'not to do my own will, for there is none of mine apart from, but that which is common to me and you, for as we have one Godhead so we have one will.' ... This meaning is evident also in the clauses that follow. For what, says he, is the will of my Father? that everyone that believes on the Son should be saved and obtain the final resurrection. Now, is this the will of the Father but not of the Son? Or does he preach the gospel and receive men's faith against his will? Who could believe that? (Ibid., 12, PG XXXVI.117,120)

Such arguments were repeated again and again by the orthodox defenders of the Nicene faith. Gregory's presentation of it is clearer and more easily grasped than most. He does not appear to use the chapter in any writing concerned with the eucharist.

Gregory of Nyssa

Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa, also wrote against the Eunomians, arguing the perennial question of the age, that the Father and Son are of the same essence. He uses the metaphor of the seal in reply to an opponent who had said that the essences of Father and Son were variant from one another.

To speak of things as at variance, then, is the same as to speak of them as out of harmony. If, therefore, the nature of the only begotten God is at variance, to use the heretical phrase, with the essence of the Father, it is surely not in harmony with it. And inharmoniousness cannot exist where there is no possibility of harmony. For the case is as when the figure in the wax and in the graving of the signet being one, the wax being stamped by the signet, when it is fitted again to the latter, makes the impression on itself accord with that which surrounds it, filling up the hollows and accommodating the projections of the engraving with its own patterns;

but if some strange and different pattern is fitted to the engraving of the signet, it makes its own form rough and confused, by rubbing off its figure on an engraved surface that does not correspond with it. But he who is in the form of God has been formed by no impression different from the Father, seeing that he is the express image of the Father's person while the form of God is surely the same thing as his essence . . . So surely he who says that he is in the form of God and being in the Father is sealed with the Father's glory (as the Word of the Gospel declares, which says, 'Him has God the Father sealed' (Jn vi.27) whence 'he that has seen me has seen the Father') then the image of goodness and the brightness of glory and all other similar titles testify that the essence of the Son is not out of harmony with the Father. Thus by the text cited is shown the insubstantial character of the adversaries' blasphemy.

(Contra Eunom. iv.8; PG XLV.669,672)

Gregory's view of scriptural interpretation as expressed in another part of this work followed the ideas of Origen, whom the writer admired, rather than the hermeneutical tendencies of the Antiochene school.³⁰ One of the key verses of the Johannine discourse is made to serve his argument.

The Scripture, given by inspiration of God, as the Apostle calls it, is the Scripture of the Holy Spirit, and its intention is the profit of men. For every Scripture, he says, is given by inspiration of God and is profitable, and the profit is varied and multi-form, as the Apostle says, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. Such a boon as this, however, is not within any man's reach to lay hold of, but the divine intention lies hid under the body of the Scripture, as it were under a veil, some legislative enactment or some historical narrative being cast over the truths that are being contemplated by the mind . . . If the bodily veil of the words were removed, that which remains is Lord and life and spirit, according to the teaching of the great Paul and according to the words of the gospel also. For

30. Ibid., p. 263.

Paul declares that he who turns from the letter to the spirit no longer apprehends the bondage that slays, but the Lord which is the life-giving spirit; and the sublime gospel says, 'the words that I speak are spirit and are life', as being divested of the bodily veil.

(Ibid., vii.1; PG XLV.741.744f)

Although he does not say so in so many words, one has the impression that Gregory might apply the other clause of verse 63 to the argument by representing the flesh that does not profit as "the bodily veil of the words" for he has taken the life-giving spirit to be the underlying divine intention of the Scripture. By implication the eating and drinking of the flesh and blood might indicate the reading or hearing of Scripture. But there the metaphor begins to break down for the flesh and blood of Christ are the source of eternal life, and therefore of eternal profit. It is more probable that Gregory has quoted the words of verse 63 without regard to the context because of the presence of the term 'life-giving spirit' which was suggested by the Pauline text he has used.

Although Gregory supplemented his brother's unfinished work on creation and in it followed Basil's example of literal exegesis, in all his other writing he showed a preference for allegory.³¹

Gregory maintains the importance of the church's sacraments, "which secure spiritual blessings and avert from believers the assaults directed against them by the wiles of the evil one" (Ibid. xi.5; PG XLV.880), in contradiction to Eunomius who had asserted that "the mystery of

31. Ibid., p. 264.

godliness does not consist in venerable names nor in the distinctive character of customs and sacramental tokens, but in exactness of doctrine" (Ibid. xi.5; PG XLV.877f). He writes:

But we, having learnt from the holy voice of Christ that 'except a man be born again of water and of the spirit he shall not enter into the kingdom of God' and that 'he that eats my flesh and drinks my blood shall live forever', are persuaded that the mystery of godliness is ratified by the confession of the divine names, the names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that our salvation is confirmed by participation in the sacramental customs and tokens.

(Ibid., xi.5; PG XLV.880)

Gregory wishes to persuade his readers that piety is not confined to holding the right doctrines but is shown rather in conduct and in conformity with the Church's traditional practices. Gregory held a eucharistic doctrine similar to that of his contemporaries, such as John Chrysostom, but in developing it he has had very little recourse to the bread of life discourse.

In his Life of Moses, a work of his later years,³² Gregory develops a mystical exegesis of the manna which clearly owes much to the Johannine passage on manna, and implies a eucharistic interpretation of the bread.

With what cleansings, with what purifying is it meet that anyone should cleanse himself from the Egyptian and alien life so as to cleanse the sack of his soul from all food of vices prepared by the Egyptians, and thus to receive in himself with a pure soul the food which comes down from heaven, which no sowing has produced for us by agriculture, but the bread is ready, unsown and untilled, coming down from heaven yet found on earth. For you perceive this, the true

32. Ibid., p. 265.

bread, under the type in the history, that the bread which came down from heaven is not an unembodied thing. For how could the unembodied become food for the body? But what is not unembodied is body. But the body of this bread neither ploughing nor sowing has produced, but the earth, remaining as it is, is found full of this divine food of which they who hunger partake, having first been instructed, through this marvellous work, in the mystery relating to the Virgin. This untilled bread then is the Word.
(De Vita Mos. II; SC 1 bis, p. 72)³³

Another passage in one of his Homilies on Ecclesiastes speaking of the believer's coming more and more to resemble Christ, describes the process at first in terms of a psychological change, in that the character of one who is admired and loved is eventually assumed by the one who loves, but then rather abruptly shifts into eucharistic terms as though the physical eating were the cause of the change in the believer.

Since then all defilement of sin is ill-favoured, and contrariwise virtue is a good savour of Christ, and the power of love works by nature a blending with that which is loved, then what we love through friendship that we become, the good savour of Christ or an ill savour. For he who loves good becomes also himself good, the goodness of him who comes to be in him transmaking the receiver into itself. Therefore he who ever is sets himself before us as food that we receiving him in ourselves may become what he is. 'For', he says, 'my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed.' He then who loves this flesh is not a friend to his own flesh, and he who is well disposed to this blood will be pure from the natural blood. For the flesh of the Word and the blood which is in that flesh has not one grace only but is both sweet to those who taste and desirable to those who long and lovely to those who love.

(Hom. in Eccl. VIII; PG XLIV.737,740)³⁴

33. ET based on E.B. Pusey, The Doctrine of the Real Presence as contained in the Fathers (London, 1855), p. 431.

34. ET based on E.B. Pusey, ibid., p. 432.

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The witness of the Cappadocian Fathers to this portion of the Fourth Gospel is, like their contemporaries, chiefly in controversy with Arian doctrine and as a source of their eucharistic teaching of the manner of Christ's presence in the sacrament. Basil's use of it, however, as authority for monastic discipline is the most noteworthy development of its use among them.

John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom was greatly admired in his day as a preacher and the great number of extant manuscripts in which his sermons, copied out again and again, have been preserved witness to the continuing popularity of his homilies during the succeeding centuries. Quasten has said, "He was by nature and by predilection a pastor of souls and a born reformer of human society."³⁵ His handling of Scripture is almost always governed by its practical application for the lives of his people. From his writings historians may gain a vivid picture of life in late fourth century Antioch and Constantinople with its great contrasts of wealth and poverty.

Chrysostom, who had received excellent training in rhetoric, is considered of all ecclesiastical writers to have written the purest Greek.³⁶ Educated in Antioch, he favoured the method of biblical

35. J. Quasten, Patrology Vol. III, p. 474.

36. A. Moulard, St. Jean Chrysostome - Sa Vie, Son Oeuvre (Paris, 1941), p. 60.

exegesis taught there,³⁷ a method which took much more account of the literal meaning and depreciated the exaggerated allegorization practised in Alexandria. Of his abilities as an exponent of that school, opinions differ. Smalley, calling him the best-known representative of its principles in the west, nevertheless judges him to be "the author who could teach his readers least about Antiochene exegesis."³⁸ A more usual assessment is that of Dirksen who writes that Chrysostom applied Antiochene principles soberly with "a clarity of exposition and a practicality of application"³⁹ and calls him "the outstanding exegete of the East by all odds."⁴⁰ Quasten speaks of "the evidence of his strict and intelligent training in the tenets" of the Antiochene school and of "the soundness of his masterful exposition."⁴¹

In his homilies Chrysostom covered the greater part of the Bible. Taking a book at a time he would preach a series of sermons that would practically amount to a detailed commentary on the book. His sermons were long and rambling, consisting usually of a kind of running commentary on the passage of Scripture, verse by verse, and ending with an extended moral exhortation, denouncing the prevalent vices of the people and extolling the virtues he wished them to practise. Moulard says, "son homélie se présente avec le décousu et

37. J. Quasten, Patrology Vol. III, p. 474.

38. B. Smalley, The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1952), p. 18.

39. A. Dirksen, Elementary Patrology (London, 1959), p. 125.

40. Ibid., p. 121.

41. J. Quasten, Patrology Vol. III, p. 433.

même le désordre d'une simple conversation."⁴²

Those on the Fourth Gospel are among the shortest of the vast number of his sermons that have survived. There are half a dozen on the sixth chapter, one upon each of the miracles, a short one on verses 26 and 27, and three on the rest of the discourse.

Chrysostom had once said, "The prophets' mouths are the mouth of God; such a mouth would say nothing idle" (Hom. in Isa. 2, PG LVI.110); and again, "Nothing is put by chance in divine Scripture" (Hom. in Gen. xxix.6, PG LIII.269). His sermons bear out this point of view for often the most inconsequential details of the narrative are made to yield some moral injunction or dogmatic affirmation. The five barley loaves and two small fish become the occasion for a rebuke to indulgence.

Let us learn, then, we who give ourselves to luxury,
what was the fare of those great and admirable men;
and in quality and quantity let us behold and imitate
the thriftiness of their table.

(Hom. in Joh. xlii.2, PG LIX.241)

Jesus' refusal of kingship is intended to teach men to despise worldly dignities (Hom. in Joh. xlii.3, PG LIX.243). The incident of the twelve baskets of fragments is said to be inserted to show that what had taken place was no illusion. Chrysostom at the same time marvels

at the exactness of the surplus, that he caused the superabundance to be neither more nor less than just so much as he willed, foreseeing how much they would consume, a thing which marked unspeakable power.

(Hom. in Joh. xlii.3, PG LIX.242)

The verse, "No man can come to me, except the Father who has sent

42. A. Moulard, op. cit., p. 61.

me draw him," (Jn vi.44) calls forth the following assertion of the interaction of man's free will with the divine activity.

The Manicheans spring upon these words saying that nothing lies in our own power, yet the expression shows that we are masters of our will. 'For if a man comes to him', says someone, 'what need is there of drawing?' But the words do not take away our free will but show that we greatly need assistance. And he implies not an unwilling comer but one enjoying much succour.

(Hom. in Joh. xlv.1, PG LIX.257f)

Another strong affirmation of man's freedom occurs when he considers the verse John vi.70.

God is not wont to make men good by compulsion and force, neither is his election and choice compulsory on those who are called, but persuasive. And that you may learn that the calling does not compel, consider how many of these who have been called have come to perdition, so that it is clear that it lies in our own will also to be saved or to perish.

(Hom. in Joh. xlvii.4, PG LIX.268)

His comment on "All that the Father gives me shall come to me, and him that comes to me I shall in no wise cast out" (Jn vi.37) is along similar lines.

What he here intimates is something of this kind, that 'faith in me is no ordinary thing but needs an impulse from above' and this he establishes throughout his discourse showing that this faith requires a noble sort of soul and one drawn on by God. But perhaps someone will say, 'If all that the Father gives and whomever he shall draw comes to you, if none can come to you except it be given him from above, then those to whom the Father gives not are free from any blame or charge.' These are mere words and pretenses. For we require our own deliberate choice also, because whether we will be taught is a matter of choice, and also whether we will believe. And in this place, by the (phrase) 'which the Father gives me' he declares nothing else than that 'the believing on me is no ordinary thing nor one that comes of human reasonings, but needs a revelation from above and a well ordered soul to receive that revelation.'

(Hom. in Joh. xlv.3, PG LIX.254)

These passages presuppose a rival exegesis, probably the Manicheans whom he has mentioned, against which Chrysostom felt compelled to protest.

In his homilies Chrysostom displays a rather psychological approach to the narrative, for he is continually inquiring into the reason and purpose behind the words and deeds of Jesus, the disciples and others in the story. On the murmuring of the Jews in John vi.41f he comments:

They still revered him because the miracle of the loaves was still recent and therefore they did not openly gainsay him but by murmuring expressed their displeasure that he did not give them the meal which they desired. And murmuring they said, 'Is not this the son of Joseph?' Whence it is plain that as yet they did not know of his strange and marvellous generation. And so they still say that he is the son of Joseph and are not rebuked; and he says not to them, 'I am not the son of Joseph,' not because he was his son but because they were not as yet able to hear of that marvellous birth ... Although this greatly offended them that he was born of a mean and common father, still he did not reveal to them the truth, lest in removing one cause of offence he should create another.

(Hom. in Joh. xlv.1, PG LIX.257)

Upon Christ's reply to Peter's confession (Jn vi.70) he remarks:

For since Peter said, 'We believe', Jesus excepts Judas from the band ... And this he did afar off and long before the time, to check the wickedness of the traitor, knowing that he should avail nothing, yet doing his own part. And remark his wisdom. He did not make the traitor manifest, yet allowed him not to be hidden, that on the one hand he might not lose all shame, and become more contentious, and on the other, that he might not, thinking to be unperceived, work his wicked work without fear. Therefore by degrees he brings plainer reproofs against him. First he numbered him also among the others, when he said, 'There are some of you who do not believe, (for that he counted the traitor the Evangelist has declared, saying, 'For he knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe and who should betray him') but when he yet remained such, he brought against him a more

severe rebuke, 'One of you is a devil,' yet made the fear common to them all, wishing to conceal him ... Besides he says not even now, 'One of you shall betray me' but 'One of you is a devil'. Therefore they did not understand what was spoken but thought that he was only reflecting on their wickedness.

(Hom. in Joh. xlvii.3.4, PG LIX.267)

Chrysostom was not unmindful of the differences between what appeared to be two accounts of the same event. John records that Jesus asked his disciples, 'Where shall we buy bread that these may eat?' (Jn vi.5). Chrysostom's comment is:

Now the other evangelists say that the disciples came and asked and besought him that he would not send them away fasting, while St. John says that the question was put to Philip by Christ. Both occurrences seem to me to be truly reported, but not to have taken place at the same time, the former account being prior to the other so that the two are entirely different.

(Hom. in Joh. xlii.1, PG LIX.240)

He gives a similar judgment on the accounts of Christ's walking on the water in Matthew and John (Mt xiv.25-32; Jn vi.19-21). He thinks Jesus performed the same miracles more than once that they might be received with greater faith. On the earlier occasion, recorded by Matthew, their fear was not immediately stilled for Peter still expressed doubt that it was really Jesus. On the occasion related by John their fear was quickly gone because they remembered the former miracle (Hom. in Joh. xliii.1, PG LIX.246).

He is concerned to clarify the exact meaning of a word or expression. Of this nature are his words about the 'sealing' of the Son (Jn vi.27) and the 'testing' of Philip (vs 6).

For after saying 'Which the Son of man shall give you', he adds 'Him has God the Father sealed,' that is, 'has sent him for this purpose that he might bring the food to you.' The saying also admits of another interpreta-

tion for in another place Christ says, 'He that hears my words has set to his seal that God is true (Jn iii.33), that is, 'has showed forth undeniably.' Which indeed the expression seems to me to hint at even in this place, for 'the Father has sealed' is nothing else than 'has declared', 'has revealed by his testimony'. He in fact declared himself too, but since he was speaking to Jews, he brought forward the testimony of the Father.

(Hom. in Joh. xlii.1, PG LIX.250)

On the verse, "And this he said to test him, for he himself knew what he would do":

What does 'to test him' mean? Did he not know what would be said by him? We cannot assert that. What then is the meaning of the expression? (Reference to Gen. xxii.1f — the testing of Abraham) ... The words are spoken ... after the manner of men. For as when he says that he searches the hearts of men, he does not mean a search of ignorance but of exact knowledge so when the Evangelist says that he tested Philip, he means only that he knew exactly ... bringing him by this question to an exact knowledge of the miracle. The Evangelist therefore that you may not stop at the feebleness of the expression, and so form an improper opinion of what was said, adds, 'he himself knew what he would do' ... When there is any wrong suspicion the writer immediately very carefully corrects it.

(Hom. in Joh. xlii.1.2, PG LIX.240f)

He explains the meaning of the phrase 'This is a hard saying'

(vs 60).

What does 'hard' mean? Rough, laborious, troublesome. Yet he said nothing of this kind, for he spoke not of a mode of life but of doctrines ... Is it because it promises life and resurrection? Is it because he said that he came down from heaven? Or that it was impossible for one to be saved who did not eat his flesh? Tell me, are these things hard? Who can assert that they are? What then does 'hard' mean? It means 'difficult to be received', 'transcending their infirmity', 'having much terror'.

(Hom. in Joh. xlvii.2, PG LIX.264)

In the fourth homily of the series on John vi Chrysostom begins to comment on the words 'I am the bread of life' (Jn vi.35).

Now he proceeds to commit unto them mysteries. And first he discourses of his Godhead, saying, 'I am the bread of life.' For this is not spoken of his body (concerning that he says towards the end, 'And the bread which I will give is my flesh') but at present it refers to his Godhead. For that, through God the Word, is bread, as this bread also, through the Spirit descending on it, is made heavenly bread.
(Hom. in Joh. xlv.2, PG LIX.253)

He does not further interpret these words until he reaches verse 48, when he says:

He calls himself the bread of life because he maintains our life, both which is and which is to be, and says, 'Whoever shall eat of this bread shall live forever.' By bread he means here either his saving doctrines and the faith which is in him or his own body for both nerve the soul.
(Hom. in Joh. xlvi.1, PG LIX.258f)

After a comment on the distinction between Christ's bread and the manna, he passes to verse 51 and from there on his interpretation of Jesus' words is almost wholly eucharistic. F.H. Chase finds Chrysostom's treatment of the discourse "not wholly without confusion" and lacking coherence,⁴³ because he has not maintained the one eucharistic interpretation throughout his exposition of the chapter. I do not think his criticism would have troubled Chrysostom or the fathers generally. Although they would frequently reject the exegesis of a rival expositor, they often regarded a passage as admitting more than one valid interpretation.

In answering the objection that his interpretation presents Christ as teaching eucharistic doctrine at a time when even the twelve disciples would not understand to what he was referring, Chrysostom indicates incidentally something of his opinion of the proper

43. F.H. Chase, Chrysostom, A Study in the History of Biblical Interpretation (Cambridge, 1887), p. 145.

relationship between a teacher and his disciple.

Here one might reasonably inquire how this was a fit season for these words which neither edified nor profited but rather did mischief to those who had been edified ... Great is the profit and necessity of them ... He mentions spiritual food to show them that all those things (i.e. the manna) were but type and shadow but that the very reality of the matter was now present with them ... And if anyone inquire why he introduced the discourse on the mysteries, we will reply that this was a very fitting time for such discourses, for indistinctness in what is said always rouses the hearer and renders him more attentive. They ought not to have been offended but rather to have asked and inquired.

Intimating that this doctrine was as strange and unusual as that of the resurrection, he continues:

If as yet they had no clear knowledge of the resurrection and so did not know what 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up' (Jn ii.19) might mean, much more would they be ignorant of what is said here. For these words were less clear than those ... Still they obeyed and followed him and confessed that he had the words of eternal life. For this is a disciple's part, not to be over-curious about the assertions of his teacher, but to hear and obey him and to wait the proper time for the solution of any difficulties ... For when questioning about the 'how' comes in, then comes in with it unbelief.

(Hom. in Joh. xlvii.2, PG LIX.259f)

He then proceeds to more direct teaching about the eucharist.

We become one body and members of his flesh and of his bones ... In order that we may become this not by love only but in very deed, let us be blended into that flesh. This is effected by the food which he has freely given us desiring to show the love which he has for us. On this account he has mixed himself up with us, he has kneaded up his body with ours, that we might be a certain one thing like a body joined to a head ... He has given to those who desire him not only to see him but even to touch and eat him and fix their teeth in his flesh and to embrace him and satisfy all their love. Let us then return from that table like lions breathing fire, having become terrible to the devil, thinking on our Head and on the love he has shown for us ... This blood causes the image of our King to be fresh within us ... The blood

derived from our food becomes not at once blood, but something else, while this does not so, but immediately waters our souls and works in them some mighty power ... Wherever they see the Lord's blood, devils flee and angels run together.

(Hom. in Joh. xlv.2.3, PG LIX.260f)

The sermon continues with a long panegyric on the benefits to be derived from participation in the eucharist. The mysteries are to be approached with awe and reverence and a warning is given to those who receive it unworthily. The striking feature of such a passage is the realism in which 'eating the flesh of Christ' is described. It may be urged that Chrysostom is carried away by the enthusiasm of the preacher in the immediate context of the preaching situation, desiring to stir the emotions of his audience to a due sense of awe in the presence of the sacrament. As Bethune-Baker says: "The licence of the rhetorical 'popular' preacher must be borne in mind in considering Chrysostom's language".⁴⁴ However, a speaker so well able to hold the attention and gain the sympathies of his hearers as Chrysostom would not resort so frequently to such expressions unless they were the categories in which he habitually thought of the sacred rite. We find, indeed, that he regularly speaks of it in similar fashion.

In his next sermon he says:

He continually handles the subject of the mysteries, showing the necessity of the action ... that they might not suppose the words to be a mere enigma or parable, but might know that it is by all means needful to eat the body.

(Hom. in Joh. xlvii.1, PG LIX.263)

44. J.F. Bethune-Baker, An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine (London, 1903), p. 415 fn 2.

In another homily we find:

For as in royal palaces what is most glorious of all is not walls or golden roofs but the person (body) of the King sitting on the throne, so likewise in heaven the body of the King. But this you are now permitted to see on earth. For it is not angels nor archangels nor heavens and heavens of heavens that I show you but the very Lord and Owner of these. Do you not see how that which is more precious than all things is seen by you on earth and not seen only, but also touched, and not touched only but likewise eaten?

(Hom. in I Cor. xxiv.5, PG LXI.205)

And again:

That which is in the cup is that which flowed from his side and of that do we partake.

(Hom. in I Cor. xxiv.1, PG LXI.200)

Do you not call to mind the water that dashed over your countenance, the sacrifice that adorns your lips, the blood that has reddened your tongue?

(Hom. in Matt. xxx.6, PG LVII.370)

He even represents Christ at the Last Supper drinking not just wine with his disciples but his own blood.

He himself drank it. For lest on hearing this, they should say, 'What then, do we drink blood and eat flesh?' and then be perplexed (for when he began to discourse concerning these things even at the very sayings many were offended) therefore lest they should be troubled then likewise, he first did this himself, leading them on to the calm participation of the mysteries. Therefore he himself drank his own blood.

(Hom. in Matt. lxxxii.1, PG LVIII.739)

Commenting on I Corinthians x.16, he refers to the fraction thus:

But why does he also add 'Which we break'? For although in the eucharist one may see this done, yet on the cross not so, but the very contrary. 'For a bone of him', says one, 'shall not be broken.' But that which he did not suffer on the cross, he suffers in the oblation for your sake, and submits to be broken, that he may fill all men.

(Hom. in I Cor. xxiv.2, PG LXI.200)

He recognizes that his teaching is contrary to the witness of the senses, but in such a situation he applies the conception of the part of a discipline already referred to.

Let us then in everything believe God, and gainsay him in nothing, though what is said seems to be contrary to our thoughts and senses, but let his word be of higher authority than both reasonings and sight.

(Hom. in Matt. lxxxii.4, PG LVIII.743)

Bardy sums up the impression received from such passages: "Ce qui frappe surtout, dans ses homélies, c'est la puissance du réalisme: le corps eucharistique du Christ est le même que son corps historique."⁴⁵ Chrysostom's practice is to transfer what is strictly true only of the bread and wine to the substance of the Lord's flesh and blood in order to emphasize as strongly as possible the truth of the real presence and the identity of the eucharistic sacrifice with that which took place upon the cross.⁴⁶ Chrysostom lays stress upon this last point.

We always offer the same person ... therefore it is one sacrifice ... By the same token the offering of the sacrifice in many places does not, of course, mean that there are many Christs. Christ is everywhere one, entire in this place and in that, one body ... and so, one sacrifice. Our high priest is he who offered the sacrifice for our purification. We offer now what was offered then, an inexhaustible offering ... We offer the same sacrifice, or rather we make a memorial of that sacrifice.

(Hom. in Heb. xvii.3, PG LXIII.131)

Symbol and reality are not separated but seen as one. The sacrifice and its memorial are not contrasted but rather, as Wiles points out, "different ways of saying the same thing".⁴⁷

45. G. Bardy, "Jean Chrysostome (Saint)" DTC 8 (Paris, 1924), col. 680.

46. J. Quasten, Patrology Vol. III, p. 480.

47. M.F. Wiles, The Christian Fathers (London, 1966), p. 132.

There are, moreover, passages which mitigate the materialism of so much of his teaching on the sacrament, but they are few. Of such a nature is his explanation of John vi.63, "It is the spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing."

His meaning is 'You must hear spiritually what relates to me for he who hears carnally is not profited, nor gathers any advantage.' It was carnal to question how he came down from heaven, to deem that he was the son of Joseph, to ask 'How can he give us his flesh to eat?' All this was carnal when they ought to have understood the matter in a mystical and spiritual sense. 'But', says someone, 'how could they understand what the eating flesh might mean?' Then it was their duty to wait for the proper time and inquire and not to abandon him.

(Hom. in Joh. xlvii.2, PG LIX.265)

And on the latter half of the verse: "The words that I speak to you are spirit and are life":

That is, they are divine and spiritual, have nothing carnal about them, are not subject to the laws of physical consequence, but are free from any such necessity, are even set above the laws appointed for this world and have also another and a different meaning. Now as in this passage he said 'spirit' instead of 'spiritual' so when he speaks of 'flesh' he meant not 'carnal things' but 'carnally hearing', and alluding at the same time to them because they ever desired carnal things when they ought to have desired spiritual ... 'What then, is not his flesh flesh?' Most certainly. 'How then says he that the flesh profits nothing?' He speaks not of his own flesh (God forbid) but of those who received his words in a carnal manner. But what is 'understanding carnally'? It is looking merely to what is before our eyes without imagining anything beyond ... We must look into all mysteries with the eyes within. This is seeing spiritually ... Do you not see that the words 'the flesh profits nothing' are spoken not of his own flesh but of carnal hearing?

(Hom. in Joh. xlvii.2, PG LIX.265)

This passage seems to place everything on a higher plane, and yet is his interpretation of 'understanding carnally' not just another

way of saying "we cannot trust the evidence of our senses with regard to the sacrament"? And if so, then hearing or seeing spiritually would mean recognizing that what appears to be merely bread and wine is in reality the true flesh and blood of Jesus. If Chrysostom did not have a realistic interpretation of this kind, then it can only be said that his manner of expressing himself must have misled his audience. The use of John vi provided him with the most telling passage for an exposition of this kind of teaching for here he had what were for him the very words of Jesus expressing it more explicitly than in any other place in Scripture.

Words could scarcely go farther in expressing the material presence of Christ in the elements than some of Chrysostom's phrases: "to touch his flesh with your tongue" (Hom. in I Cor. xxvii.5, PG LXI.231), "to fix their teeth in his flesh" (Hom. in Joh. xlvi.3, PG LIX.260). Bethune-Baker says that "no further development of the doctrine took place till later times."⁴⁸ Indeed, all that remained to be done in that direction was the philosophical elaboration of the relationship between substance and accidents as expounded by Thomas Aquinas.⁴⁹

48. J.F. Bethune-Baker, op. cit., p. 416.

49. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae Vol. 58, "The Eucharistic Presence" Latin text & ET W. Barden, O.P. (London, 1965), pp. 53-91.

VII. FOURTH CENTURY WESTERN AUTHORS

Hilary of Poitiers.

Hilary's own statement of his understanding of Scripture, found at the beginning of his Tractatus Mysteriorum, has often been quoted, e.g., by Labriolle,¹ Le Bachelet² and Galtier³:

The whole work which is contained in the sacred books announces in words, expresses in facts and confirms by examples the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ who, sent by the Father, was born man from the virgin by the Spirit.
(Tract. Myst. I.1, CSEL 65, p. 3)

Kannengiesser reduces his principles of exegesis to two rules: "Le texte biblique doit être cherché dans le respect de la lettre même de ce texte" and "à la lumière de la Révélation globale du mystère de Dieu, manifesté en Jesus Christ."⁴

Borchardt gives a somewhat fuller idea of Hilary's criteria for interpretation, supported by frequent reference to his writings.⁵ The text should be given the plain and ordinary meaning of its words, taking the context of the passage into consideration and not have any arbitrary meaning imported into it, for Hilary writes:

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1. P. de Labriolle, op. cit., p. 324.
 2. X. Le Bachelet, "Hilaire (Saint)" DTC 6 (Paris, 1920), col. 2401f.
 3. P. Galtier, Saint Hilaire de Poitiers, le premier docteur de l'Eglise latine (Paris, 1960), p. 160.
 4. C. Kannengiesser, "L'exégèse d'Hilaire" Hilaire et Son Temps (Paris, 1968), p. 140f.
 5. C.F.A. Borchardt, Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle (Gravenhage, 1966), pp. 48-53.

There have arisen many who have given to the plain words of Holy Writ some arbitrary interpretation of their own instead of its true and only sense, and this in defiance of the clear meaning of words. For heresy does not come from Scripture, but from the interpretation of it; the exposition, not the text, is to blame.

(De Trin. II.3, PL X.51)

There shall be no stringing together of isolated phrases whose context is suppressed, to trick and misinform the unpractised listener. The meaning of words shall be ascertained by considering the circumstances under which they were spoken; words must be explained by circumstances, not circumstances forced into conformity with words.

(De Trin. IV.14, PL X.107)

Criticising the exegesis of the Arians, he speaks of them as

quoting single detached utterances to catch the ears of the unwary and keeping back either the sequel which explains or the incidents which prompted them, though the meaning of words must be sought in the context before or after them.

(De Trin. IX.2, PL X.282)

As Kannengiesser has pointed out, this consideration led Hilary to the conclusion that David was not the author of all the psalms, although they were all commonly attributed to him (Instr. Ps. 2, COEL XXII, p.4).⁶

Preconceived ideas and wishful thinking should not be permitted to distort the meaning of Scripture, which ought rather to be allowed to speak for itself, since

We must learn from God what we are to think of God; we have no source of knowledge but himself ... we must confine ourselves in what we say of God to the terms in which he has spoken to our understanding concerning himself.

(De Trin. V.21, PL X.143)

6. C. Kannengiesser, op. cit., p. 140f.

And again:

For he whom we can only know through his own utterances
is the fitting witness concerning himself.

(De Trin. I.18, PL X.38)

Hilary defended, however, against Arian criticism the use of anthropological analogies in expounding a doctrine of God, precisely because Scripture itself employs them.

We shall avert from God the charge that he has deceived us in using these analogies, showing as we have done, that such illustrations from the nature of his creatures enables us to grasp the meaning of God's self-revelation to us.

(De Trin. VII.30, PL X.225)

Hilary warns against juggling with words as the Arians do when in defining the Son's relationship to the Father, they speak of 'God' and 'not true God'. He writes:

If anyone says to me, 'This is fire but not true fire, water but not true water,' I can attach no intelligible meaning to his words ... If a thing is fire it must be true fire ... The only way in which an object can lose its nature is by losing its existence; if it continues to exist it must be truly itself. If the Son of God is God then he must be true God; if he is not true God, then in no possible sense is he God at all.

(De Trin. V.14, PL X.137)

Passages from the sixth chapter of John prove useful to Hilary in his refutation of the Arians, chiefly in defining the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son, maintaining their unity of nature as one God and the full divinity of Christ.

Taking a passage which the Arians had used to prove the weakness of the Son in comparison with the Father and his subjection to him, thus implying that they were not of the same nature, Hilary maintains just the contrary, asserting that the Son is our only sure revelation

of the Father. The text from which he starts is Jn vi.37, 38.

But perhaps you say the Son has no freedom of will: the weakness of his nature subjects him to necessity and he is denied free will, and subjected to necessity that he may not reject those who are given to him and come from the Father. Nor was the Lord content to demonstrate the mystery of the unity of his action in not rejecting those who are given to him, not seeking to do his own will instead of the will of him who sent him, but when the Jews, after the repetition of the words 'Him that sent me', began to murmur, he confirms our interpretation by saying, 'Everyone who hears ... everlasting life' (Jn vi.45b-47). Now tell me first, where has the Father been heard and where has he taught his hearers? No one has seen the Father save him who is from God: has anyone ever heard him whom no one has even seen? He that has heard from the Father comes to the Son: and he that has heard the teaching of the Son has heard the teaching of the Father's nature, for its properties are revealed in the Son. When, therefore, we hear the Son teaching, we must understand that we are hearing the teaching of the Father ... The Father teaches through the words of the Son and, though seen of none, speaks to us in the manifestation of the Son, because the Son by virtue of his perfect birth possesses all the properties of his Father's nature. The only begotten God, desiring therefore to testify of the Father's authority, yet inculcating his own unity with the Father's nature, does not cast out those who are given to him of the Father, or work his own will instead of the will of him that sent him: not that he does not will what he does, or is not himself heard when he teaches, but in order that he may reveal him who sent him and himself the Sent, under the aspect of one indistinguishable nature, he shows all that he wills and says and does to be the will and works of the Father.

(De Trin. IX.49, PL X.320)

Hilary further argues with them on this same theme of subjection and identity of nature:

Is the subjection still to be understood as the subordination of servitude to lordship, weakness to power, meanness to honour, qualities the opposite of one another? ... When all things are subjected to him, then must he be subjected to him who subjects all things to himself, and by this 'then' he means to denote the temporal dispensation. For if we put any other construction on the subjection, Christ

though then to be subjected, is not subjected now, and thus we make him an insolent and impious rebel whom the necessity of time, breaking, as it were, and subduing his profane and overweening pride, will reduce to a tardy obedience. But what does he himself say?

Hilary then quotes Jn vi.38, viii.29 and Lk xxi.42, and proceeds:

Of a truth this subjection is no sign of a fresh obedience but the dispensation of the mystery, for the allegiance is eternal, the subjection an event within time.

(De Trin. XI.30, PL X.419)

In maintaining Christ's divinity with all the divine attributes including omniscience, Hilary seeks to interpret in what sense is to be understood the text which asserts Christ's ignorance of the day and hour of his second coming (Mk xiii.32). In doing so he sets against it Jn vi.64. Since all things were created through him, how was it possible that Christ should not know the unborn future of those whom he had created and if he could perceive the future of others, could he possibly be ignorant of his own future? (De Trin. IX.59 PL X.328f). An additional proof of Christ's omniscience is found in Colossians ii.2, 3 where he is said to possess all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Seemingly conflicting texts must be harmonized. "Whenever God says that he does not know," asserts Hilary, "he professes ignorance indeed, but is not under the defect of ignorance. It is not because of the infirmity of ignorance that he does not know, but because it is not yet the time to speak, or the divine plan to act." (De Trin. IX.63, PL X.331).

He explains the significance of the phrase 'For him has the Father sealed' (Jn vi.27) as indicating the identity of nature in Father and Son, but he finds it is not a perfectly satisfactory figure

to describe the divine relationship.

It is the nature of a seal to exhibit the whole form of the figure graven upon it, and that an impression taken from it reproduces it in every respect ... Yet this comparison is not adequate to exemplify the divine birth, because in seals there is a matter, difference of nature, and an act of impression, whereby the likeness of stronger natures is impressed upon things of a more yielding nature. (De Trin. VIII.44, PL X.269)

Basil similarly interpreted this verse, saying, "Him has the Father sealed by engraving himself on him" (De Spiritu Sancto VI.15, PG XXXII.92). Hilary understands that Christ wished to teach by this saying that he possessed all the fullness of the divine form and therefore had the power of giving the food which does not perish but brings eternal life. Because the saying is inadequate to the full doctrine of Christ's nature it must be supplemented by the teaching of other passages of Scripture, such as Philippians ii.6f which teaches that he whom the Father sealed is God abiding in the form of God. From such expressions and other passages which assert the divine nature of Christ, as Colossians i.15-20 which he quotes in full, Hilary affirms that Christ is not a God of another kind as, in the case of seals, the steel die is different from the lead or wax on which it is impressed (De Trin. VIII.45-49, PL X.270-272). Thus we see that Hilary, interpreting a verse in the light of the whole body of Scripture, does not hesitate to judge even a statement of the Lord inadequate to a full understanding of the doctrine Hilary believes Jesus is proclaiming.

From this part of John's Gospel Hilary draws some of his teaching regarding the incarnation, at times merely expressing amazement at the sheer wonder of the great event.

What does it mean that the Son of man descended from heaven who remained in heaven? (Jn iii.13?)
 ... The infant wails but is in heaven; the boy grows but remains ever the immeasurable God ...
 The Lord says 'What if you should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?' (Jn vi.62)
 ... Can sense comprehend this? The Son of man descends from heaven who is in heaven. Can reason cope with this?

(De Trin. X.54, PL X.386)

Somewhat before this outburst, having first asserted the mystery of the assumption of manhood by the Word, whereby though on earth as Son of man he yet remained in heaven as Word, exercising his power over all, Hilary continues:

The Lord himself, revealing the mystery of his birth, speaks thus: 'I am the living bread who have descended from heaven; if any man shall eat of my bread he shall live forever' (Jn vi.51), calling himself the bread since he is the origin of his own body. Further, that it may not be thought the Word left his own virtue and nature for the flesh, he says again that it is his bread; since he is the bread which descends from heaven, his body cannot be regarded as sprung from human conception, because it is shown to be from heaven. And his language concerning his bread is an assertion that the Word took a body, for he adds, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have not life in you' (Jn vi.53). Hence, inasmuch as the Being who is Son of man descended also as bread from heaven, by the 'bread descending from heaven' and by the 'flesh and blood of the Son of man' must be understood his assumption of the flesh, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin.

(De Trin. X.18, PL X.356f)

Hilary then asserts that Christ possesses in himself both whole and perfect manhood and whole and perfect Godhead. The phrase, 'since he is the origin of his own body', probably refers to the virgin nature of his birth. Is there also a reference to the Word as agent

in creation? If the bread from heaven and the flesh and blood of the Son of man signify 'the incarnation', would eating them be a way of saying 'believe in the incarnation', and, if it does, could it be assumed to rule out a eucharistic reference?⁷ Since this passage is for Hilary a witness of the incarnation, he may be regarded as recapturing something of its significance for the gospel writer who in all probability was opposing docetic ideas. However, later in this same book of the De Trinitate Hilary himself is found describing the body of Christ in terms which have led some commentators to term him a docetist. Harnack did so⁸ and Borchardt recognizes a "docetic strain in Hilary's thought".⁹ Hilary writes:

So the man Jesus Christ ... without ceasing to be himself, that is, God, took true humanity after the likeness of our humanity. But when, in this humanity, he was struck with blows, or smitten with wounds, or bound with ropes, or lifted on high, he felt the force of suffering but without its pain. Thus a dart passing through the water or piercing a flame or wounding the air, inflicts all that it is its nature to do; it passes through, pierces, wounds, but all this is without effect on the thing it strikes ... So our Lord Jesus Christ suffered blows, hanging, crucifixion and death but the suffering which attacked the body of the Lord, without ceasing to be suffering, had not the natural effect of suffering ... He had a body to suffer and he suffered, but he had not a nature which could feel pain.

(De Trin. X.23, PL X.361-3)

One is inclined to remark here that Hilary is capable of juggling with words just as he accused the Arians of doing. With regard to the gospel account of Christ's hunger, thirst and tears he writes:

7. Or again, since the eucharistic bread is called his body, it may be that Hilary says he called himself the bread that the eucharistic bread may be understood to be Christ himself, not something apart from him.

8. A. Harnack, History of Dogma Vol. IV, ET E.B. Spiers & J. Millar (London, 1898), p. 140, fn 2.

9. C.F.A. Borchardt, op. cit., p. 186.

He conformed to the habits of the body to prove the reality of his own body ... When he ate and drank, it was a concession, not to his own necessities, but to our habits.

(De Trin. X.24, PL X.364)

Hilary distinguished suffering from pain, the one being the wounding of the body, the other the consciousness of the wound. Martyrs had been known to be raised by the intensity of their faith and hope to a pitch where they were no longer aware of the tortures they were undergoing. Hilary appears to think of Christ as having a natural insensibility of that kind. Consequently Hilary's 'docetism' is not that of a phantom body but rather that of a true body of flesh but one so united with the divine Word that it partakes wholly of the divine properties, one of which was considered to be impassibility. He writes:

That body was truly and indeed body because it was born of the Virgin, but it was above the weakness of our body, because it had its beginning in a spiritual conception.

(De Trin. X.35, PL X.371)

The divinity of Christ is further asserted from this portion of the Gospel by a comment on the words 'As the living Father has sent me, and I live through the Father' (Jn vi.57).

He is the living God, the eternal power of the living divine nature; and that which is born from him, according to the mysterious truth which he reveals, could not be other than living ... Now if the living Son was born from the living Father, that birth took place without a new nature coming into existence.

(De Trin. VII.27, PL X.223)

Hilary repeats this truth again and again, finding support for it in many texts throughout the Scriptures.

Hilary's references to the eucharist are few, but in a long passage of the De Trinitate he uses the words of Christ about partaking of his flesh and blood in John vi in a sacramental sense and in a most unusual argument. The passage is as follows:

Now I ask those who bring forward a unity of will between Father and Son, whether Christ is in us today through verity of nature or through agreement of will. For if in truth the Word has been made flesh and we in very truth receive the Word made flesh as food from the Lord, are we not bound to believe that he abides in us naturally, who born as a man has assumed the nature of our flesh now inseparable from himself, and has conjoined the nature of his own flesh to the nature of the eternal Godhead in the sacrament by which his flesh is communicated to us? For so are we all one, because the Father is in Christ and Christ in us. Whoever then shall deny that the Father is in Christ naturally must first deny that either he is himself in Christ naturally, or Christ in him, because the Father in Christ and Christ in us make us one in them. Hence, if indeed Christ has taken to himself the flesh of our body and that Man who was born from Mary was indeed Christ, and we indeed receive in a mystery the flesh of his body ... how can a unity of will be maintained, seeing that the special property of nature received through the sacrament is the sacrament of a perfect unity? ... For he says himself, 'My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.' As to the verity of the flesh and blood there is no room left for doubt. For now from both the declaration of the Lord himself and our own faith, it is truly flesh and truly blood. And these when eaten and drunk bring it to pass that both we are in Christ and Christ in us . . .

Now how it is that we are in him through the sacrament of the flesh and blood bestowed upon us, he himself testifies, saying, 'And the world will no longer see me but you shall see me; because I live you shall live also, because I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you.' If he wished to indicate a mere unity of will, why did he set forth a kind of gradation and sequence in the completion of the unity, unless it were that, since he was in the Father through the nature of deity, and we on the contrary in him through his birth in the body, he would have us believe that he is in us

through the mystery of the sacraments? and thus there might be taught a perfect unity through a mediator, whilst we abiding in him, he abode in the Father and as abiding in the Father abode also in us; and so we might arrive at unity with the Father, since in him who dwells naturally in the Father by birth, we also dwell naturally, while he himself also abides naturally in us.

Again, how natural this unity is in us he has himself testified in this way, 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him' (Jn vi.56). For no man shall dwell in him, except him in whom he dwells himself, for the only flesh that he has taken to himself is the flesh of those who have taken his. Now he had already taught before the sacrament of this perfect unity, saying, 'As the living Father sent me and I live through the Father, so he that eats my flesh shall himself also live through me.' (Jn vi.57). So then he lives through the Father and as he lives through the Father, in like manner we live through his flesh... This is the cause of our life that we have Christ dwelling within our carnal selves through the flesh, and we shall live through him in the same manner as he lives through the Father. If then we live naturally through him according to the flesh, that is, have partaken of the nature of his flesh, must he not naturally have the Father within himself according to the Spirit since he himself lives through the Father? And he lives through the Father because his birth has not implanted in him an alien and different nature, inasmuch as his very being is from him yet is not divided from him by any barrier of an unlikeness of nature, for within himself he has the Father through the birth in the power of the nature. I have dwelt upon these facts because the heretics falsely maintain that the union between Father and Son is one of will only, and make use of the example of our own union with God, as though we were united to the Son and through the Son to the Father by mere obedience and a devout will, and none of the natural verity of communion were bestowed upon us through the sacrament of the body and blood, although the glory of the Son bestowed upon us through the Son abiding in us after the flesh, while we are united in him corporeally and inseparably, bids us preach the mystery of the true and natural unity.

(De Trin. VIII.13 - 17, PL X.246-249)

The question Hilary is debating is the kind of union that exists between Christ and his Father. He wishes to maintain that their union

is not a matter of unanimity of will only but one of very essence. Both Hilary and his Arian opponents were willing that the union of Christ and the Father should be understood as the same in character as our union with Christ (Jn xvii.22). But whereas they took the latter to be one of obedience and will only, he claimed it was one of nature and found his support in the incarnation and in the sacrament.

Christ abides in the Father through his participation in the nature of deity. At his birth in the body he assumed the nature of man and thus we are in him through the incarnation, that is, both partake of man's nature. Finally Christ comes to be in the believer by means of the eucharist. The indwelling of Christ in the believer and that of the believer in Christ are said to take place 'Naturaliter, carnaliter, corporaliter.' Christ's abiding in the Father must therefore also be by nature, 'naturaliter'.

Bobrinskoy remarks: "Cette preuve eucharistique du divinité du Verbe Incarné nous semble être ... un des aspects les moins utilisés par les docteurs de l'Orthodoxie contre l'arianisme."¹⁰ Hilary's use of the sacramental feeding on Christ in such an argument reveals something of his understanding of the rite itself. It does not seem possible that he should regard the bread and wine as symbolic only for he stresses the fleshly nature of the sacrament. "As to the verity of the flesh and blood there is no room left for doubt", he says (De Trin. VIII.14). "He himself is in us through the flesh (per carnem)"

10. B. Bobrinskoy, "L'Eucharistie et le mystère du salut chez Hilaire de Poitiers" Hilaire et Son Temps (Paris, 1968), p. 239.

(Ibid.). "We have Christ dwelling within our carnal selves (in nobis carnalibus) through the flesh" (VIII.16). "We are united in him corporeally (corporaliter) and inseparably" (VIII.17). However, it cannot be simply Christ's human flesh, his bare humanity, that he refers to, for the participant already has union with his human nature through the incarnation. The eucharist must, therefore, involve the imparting of Christ's combined divine-human nature. Since it appears to be through the physical eating that the union takes place, the elements must be something more than mere bread and wine. No indication is given as to how the transformation has occurred, but that the elements at the time they are eaten by the communicants are regarded as the flesh and blood of Christ seems undeniable. If they were not, Hilary's argument would lose its force and he would not have proved that Christ is by nature in God as he is by nature in us. Borchardt seeks to clarify his thought by saying:

By natural unity he means one founded on the nature either of the two things joined together or of the bond joining them. By opposing this natural unity to a unity of wills, he must mean a physical unity, or at least one that more closely approaches physical unity than a clearly moral union does ... for Hilary, faith, glory and eucharist are natures and a nature has objective reality and here means a reality over and above a product of the mind and will. 11

Thus, in Hilary we do not have simply a use of the Johannine expressions in such a manner that their interpretation remains ambiguous, as so often is the case with the writers of the early Church, but one

11. C.F.A. Borchardt, op. cit., p. 100.

in which his argument depends upon a specific understanding of their meaning. This becomes, therefore, a most important passage in determining the significance of John vi for the eucharistic doctrine of the Church in his time. Hilary's reason for quoting John, however, is to maintain the divinity of Christ's nature and explain his understanding of the incarnation and relationship between the Father and the Son. Since it was not direct eucharistic teaching, his view of the sacrament is detected by inference only.

Ambrose of Milan

Although Ambrose was elected to the episcopate in Milan even before he was baptized and so spent no preparatory period of study before entering upon the duties of the office which included preaching and teaching, he succeeded, through learning and teaching at the same time, in making himself competent in the religious issues of his time and produced a number of theological works of considerable merit. He studied the Greek theologians and was inspired by much of their thought.¹² Dudden has shown that in many ways "he exercised an important influence on the development of Western religious thought."¹³

In seeking to interpret and expound the Scriptures Ambrose was conscious of dealing with a revelation that came directly from God. The sacred writers "wrote that which the Spirit gave them to speak" (Epis. VIII.1, PL XVI.912). Of the author of the Fourth Gospel he

12. F.H. Dudden, The Life and Times of St. Ambrose Vol. II (Oxford, 1935), p. 555f.

13. Ibid., p. 555; see also his remarks pp. 572, 601, 644 and esp. 673-676.

said, "The words he spoke were not his own, but God's" (De Virginitate 132, PL XVI.301). When difficulties of interpretation arose, he believed one text should be used to clarify another, for he wrote, "We must compare divine things with each other, the better to draw our conclusion" (Epis. XXIX(M.43).3, CSEL 82, p. 196). Of his admiration of the Greek theologians he had read, Dudden remarks: "As regards the matter of his discourses, Ambrose did not scruple to borrow when it suited his convenience, from earlier writers - especially from Origen and Basil."¹⁴ From them he learned the allegorical method of exegesis and employed it with great thoroughness. He subscribed to Origen's threefold sense of the Scriptures - the historic (or as he called it the natural), the moral and the mystic, even classifying whole books as exhibiting these characteristics in a marked degree. Genesis and Ecclesiastes, for instance, were considered predominantly historic, whereas Deuteronomy and Proverbs were examples of the moral and Leviticus and the Song of Songs of the mystic sense, although all three senses were to be found to some extent in each of them (Expl. Ps 36.1, CSEL 64, p. 70). Of the Fourth Gospel he wrote: "There is truly natural wisdom in the book of the Gospel which is inscribed according to John, for no one, I dare say, has seen the majesty of God with such sublimity of wisdom and revealed it to us in his own words" (In Luc. prol.3, CSEL 32(4), p. 5). But whatever the dominant note of the writer Ambrose looked for the deeper sense of the passage. Malden says, "In his eyes" Scripture "is really a species of sacred

14. Ibid., p. 459.

cypher."¹⁵ Its more profound meanings are to be discovered by allegorizing.

Dudden remarks that names "not unfrequently are made the starting-points of elaborate trains of allegorizing."¹⁶ His interpretation of the significance of the name Bethlehem Ephrathah may be cited as an instance of Ambrose's fondness for that type of exegesis.

For it is not without good reason that the prophet's words 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah' excited your attention. For how can that house where Christ was born be the house of wrath? Such is, indeed, what the name of the place signifies, but certain mysterious operations are declared thereby ... That house which was to you 'the house of one seeing wrath' is become the 'house of bread'; where rage was, there is now piety, where the slaughter of the innocents, there now the redemption of all mankind, as it is written, 'But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth that is Ruler in Israel.' Bethlehem is the house of bread; Ephrathah the house of one seeing wrath. This is the interpretation of these names. In Bethlehem Christ was born of Mary, but Bethlehem is the same as Ephrathah. Thus Christ was born in the house of wrath and therefore it is no longer a house of wrath but the house of bread for it received that bread which came down from heaven ... Therefore everyone that receives that bread which comes down from heaven is the house of bread, that is, the Bread of Christ, being nourished and supported and having its heart strengthened by that heavenly bread which dwells within it ... Every faithful soul is Bethlehem ... That is the true bread which when broken into pieces fed all men.

(Epis. xviii(M.70).2.9.13, CSEL 82, pp. 128f, 132, 134f)

One wonders where Ambrose got the meaning 'house of wrath' for Ephrathah. The name is believed to be merely a territorial designation

15. R.H. Malden, "St. Ambrose as an Interpreter of Holy Scripture" JTS 16, 1915, 515.

16. F.H. Dudden, op. cit., p. 459.

without further significance.¹⁷ Dudden says that when Ambrose, who is supposed not to have known Hebrew, gives the explanation of a Hebrew name, he is dependent on Philo or on some source now unknown.¹⁸

In reply to an inquiry he interprets the manna of the Israelites, receiving his inspiration, no doubt, from John vi. He writes:

You ask me why the Lord God does not now rain manna as he did on our fathers. If you consider, he does rain manna from heaven on those who serve him, and that day by day. The earthly manna is indeed to this very day found in many places, but it is not now an event so miraculous because that which is perfect is come. Now that which is perfect is the Bread from heaven, the Body born of the Virgin, as to which the Gospel sufficiently instructs us. Oh how greatly does this excel that which went before it! For they who eat that manna or bread are dead, but he that eats of this bread shall live forever. But there is also a spiritual manna, the dew that is of spiritual wisdom ... Wherefore he who comprehends this outpouring of divine wisdom receives pleasure from it, nor requires any other food, nor lives by bread alone, but by every word of God ... This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. And hear further what this bread is, the word, he says, which the Lord has commanded.
The manna kept till the rising of the sun was unfit to be eaten; in other words, after the coming of Christ, it lost its grace. For when the Sun of Righteousness arose, and the more illustrious sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ appeared, lower things were to cease and the people were to take in their stead what was more perfect.

(Epig. LXIV.1.2.8, PL XVI.1219, 1222)

We see here that for Ambrose a given passage need not be confined to one typological sense, for he has given more than one interpretation

17. G.W. Wade, The Books of the Prophets Micah, Obadiah, Joel and Jonah (London, 1925), p. 40; R.E. Wolfe, Int.B Vol. VI (Nashville, 1956), p. 931. Jerome's interpretation of the name is quite different. He gives two alternatives for Efratha, 'fruitful' (ubertas, frugifera) and 'dusty' (pulverulenta) (Lib. Interp. Heb. Nom., CCL 72, pp. 65, 99).

18. F.H. Dudden, op. cit., p. 456; also R.H. Malden, op. cit., p. 515.

of the bread from heaven. It is not clear what he means by saying that the earthly manna is found to this very day. It may refer to the eucharist, although it seems strange that he should regard the eucharist as less miraculous than the giving of manna. But his reference to the eating of this bread appears to refer to the sacrament. A second interpretation sees the manna as a type of the word of instruction and preaching. The later section of the letter again refers to the manna as a type of the eucharist.

In his treatise De Excessu Fratris dealing with belief in the resurrection Ambrose quotes the references to the raising of believers in John vi (vs 39, 40) as sure promises of resurrection for the faithful, drawing particular attention to the repetition. "He thought it not sufficient to have said this once but marked it for express repetition, for this follows: For this is the will of my Father who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes on him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (De Excessu Frat. II.89, CSEL 73, p. 298). Such a comment brings home to us the fact that the Fathers looked upon such a discourse as the verbatim record of what Jesus had said, repetitions and all.

Ambrose gives a lengthy interpretation of the verse 'As the living Father has sent me and I live by the Father, so he that eats me, lives also by me' (Jn vi.57) in order to refute its Arian interpretation that Christ is subordinate to the Father. His method is to compare it with other passages dealing with the concept 'life'.

'How,' they ask, 'is the Son equal with the Father when he has said that he lives by the Father?' Let those who oppose us on this ground tell us first what the life of the Son is. Is it a life bestowed by the Father upon one lacking life? But how could the Son ever fail to possess life, he himself being the life, as he says: 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.' Truly his life is eternal even as his power is eternal. ... Think of what was read this day concerning the Lord Jesus that 'he died for our sakes that whether we wake or sleep we may live with him'. He whose death is life, is not his Godhead life, seeing that the Godhead is life eternal? But is his life truly in the Father's power? Why, he showed that even his bodily life was not in the power of any other, as we have it on record ... (Jn x.17f quoted) ... Just as he gives us to understand that his laying down his life was done of his own power and of his own free will, so also he teaches us, in laying it down in obedience to his Father's command, the unity of his own with the Father's will.

Returning to the verse in question (Jn vi.57), Ambrose says:

Let us expound his meaning as best we can, nay, rather let him expound it himself. Take notice then what he said in an earlier part of his discourse ... 'Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall have no life in you' (Jn vi.53). He first premises that he was speaking as Son of man; do you think then that what he has said as Son of man concerning his flesh and his blood is to be applied to his Godhead? Then he added, 'For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink' (vs 55). You hear him speak of his flesh and blood, you perceive the sacred pledges of the Lord's death, and you dishonour his Godhead. Hear his own words: 'A spirit has not flesh and bones.' Now as often as we receive the sacramental elements which by the mysterious efficacy of holy prayer are transfigured into the flesh and the blood, we do show the Lord's death ... How then do they suppose that we are to understand these words? (i.e. vs 57) for the comparison can be shown as a double one. The first comparison being after the following manner: Even as the living Father has sent me, I live by the Father; the second: Even as the living Father has sent me and I live by the Father, so also he that eats me, he too lives by me.

According to the first of these comparisons Ambrose points out that, since Christ was sent as Son of man, he lives by the Father in that character and that he who eats him lives by the Son of man. However, according to the second, he says the Son quickens men as the Father has quickened human nature in the Son, from which he infers both the equality of the Son with the Father and his likeness to men. Christ's words refer to his character as Son of man, not to his Godhead. Ambrose continues:

If anyone would apply the force of either comparison to Christ's Godhead, then the Son of God is put on one footing with men, so that the Son of God lives by the Father just as we live by the Son of God. But the Son of God bestows eternal life by free gift, we cannot do so. If then he is placed on a level with us, he too does not bestow this gift. Let Arius' disciples then have the due reward of their faith, which is, not to obtain eternal life from the Son.

(De Fide IV.118-131, CSEL 78, pp. 199-203)

The above is a good example of the kind of exegesis often used in the Arian controversy in which a verse was made to yield one doctrine by the Arians and the contrary by the orthodox. One wonders whether such arguments really persuaded anyone not already convinced.

Ambrose was the first Western theologian to write a treatise devoted to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit which had not previously been defined in the West with such care.¹⁹ In the course of his treatment of that subject, he shows that equally with Father and Son, the Holy Spirit is life, using Jn vi.63 in his exposition.

19. F.H. Dudden, op. cit., p. 571f.

Learn now that as the Father is the Fount of Life so too many have stated that the Son is signified as the Fount of Life, so that, he says, 'with thee, Almighty God, thy Son is the Fount of Life.' That is the Fount of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is life, as the Lord says, 'The words which I speak to you are Spirit and Life,' for where the Spirit is there also is life and where life is, is also the Holy Spirit.

(De Spiritu Sancto I.152, CSEL 79, p. 80)

This is one of the cases in which Scripture indeed seems to be a 'sacred cypher' to be given any meaning that happened to suit the expositor, and it is one of his less felicitous choices. At least to a present day understanding of the text it seems particularly off the mark.

In the writings of Ambrose we have two sets of instructions to the newly baptized, corresponding to the mystagogic lectures of the Bishop of Jerusalem. They cover much the same ground and contain much common material. The style of De Sacramentis is more that of spoken addresses in contrast with the more literary style of De Mysteriis which shows the more careful preparation of a work intended as a formal treatise. Ambrose's authorship of De Sacramentis has been doubted on the grounds of style, of some slight doctrinal considerations and of the unlikelihood that an author would write a second book so closely resembling one of his earlier works.²⁰ Others strongly support the theory that De Sacramentis is a shorthand record of Ambrose's actual sermons to the newly baptized and that he later revised and polished it for publication, omitting the section on the Lord's Prayer and

20. Ibid., p. 706f; also F.R.M. Hitchcock, "Origen's Theory of the Holy Communion and Its Influence in the Church" CQR 131, 1941, 236; also L. Duchesne, Christian Worship ET M.L. McClure (London, 1912), p. 177.

the liturgical formulas in accordance with the Church's practice of withholding all such texts from any but baptized Christians. They believe this revised work is De Mysteriis.²¹ C. Mohrmann ably supports this argument by a study of the oral elements of the style of De Sacramentis.²² Dom Botte is convinced that the partisans of authenticity have won their case.²³

In both these works Ambrose makes some use of the discourse in John vi for his exposition of eucharistic doctrine. In De Mysteriis he uses phrases from verses 49, 50, 51, without quoting them in any connected fashion, when asserting the greater excellence of the food of the Christian sacrament over the manna eaten by the Hebrews. Its eternal benefit is contrasted with the temporary nature of the earlier gift of manna, the preservation from corruption which it confers with the liability of the manna to corruption. He concludes the comparison with the words:

That was in shadow, this is in reality ... For the light is better than the shadow, the reality is better than the figure, the body of the author and giver is better than manna from heaven.

(De Myst. 48,49, CSEL 73, p. 110)

He has merely expanded the ideas he found already expressed in John.

In De Sacramentis he deals with the doubts of those who, having heard the affirmations of John vi.53ff, exclaim:

21. H. Connolly, "The De Sacramentis A Work of St. Ambrose" DR 59, 1941, 12; also B. Botte, Des Sacrements, Des Mystères, SC 25 bis (Paris, 1949), p. 23; also J.H. Srawley, ed., St. Ambrose: On the Sacraments and On the Mysteries (revised edition), (London, 1950), p.v.

22. C. Mohrmann, "Le style oral du De Sacramentis de Saint Ambroise" VC 6, 1952, 163-177.

23. B. Botte, op. cit., p. 12.

How are these things real? I who see the likeness (similitudinem) do not see the reality of blood.

In reply Ambrose says:

When the disciples of Christ did not endure his saying, hearing that he gave his flesh to eat and gave his blood to drink, they turned back; but Peter alone said: 'You have the words of eternal life and how shall I withdraw from you?' Accordingly, lest others should say this, feeling a shrinking from actual blood, and that yet the grace of redemption might remain, therefore, you receive the sacrament in a similitude but truly obtain the grace and virtue of the nature. 'I am,' says he, 'the living bread which came down from heaven.' But flesh did not come down from heaven, that is to say, he took flesh from the Virgin on earth. How, then, did bread come down from heaven and that, too, living bread? Because our Lord Jesus Christ is alike a sharer both in divinity and body. And you who receive his flesh partake of his divine essence in that food.

(De Sac. VI.2.3.4, CSEL 73, p. 72f)

Johanny says that, taken by itself, 'similitudo' may appear pure symbolism, and to explain the term writes:

'Similitudo' précise le mode de perception que nous avons de ce corps et de ce sang et ainsi s'oppose à un réalisme grossier de sang qui coule, ce qui ne pourrait provoquer que dégoût ... Les expressions similitudo, in similitudine ne contredisent donc en rien la réalité ou la vérité du corps et du sang du Christ en son eucharistie, mais entendent dire le mode d'être sacramentel de ce corps et de ce sang. C'est sous les apparences ou sous le symbole du pain et du vin que le Christ nous est donné. 24

The difficulty of defining such a term is realised when it is noted that Johanny has himself used the word 'symbole' in his explanation of its meaning, although he states that it involves something more than that.

24. R. Johanny, L'Eucharistie, centre de l'histoire du salut chez Saint Ambroise de Milan (Paris, 1968), p. 110.

Ambrose teaches that a change occurs in the elements when they are consecrated by the use of the Lord's own words.

Before the blessing of the heavenly words another kind of thing is named, after consecration it is designated body.

(De Myst. 54, CSEL 73, p. 113)

The change is comparable to the miracles of the Old Testament, some of which he relates. Like them and like the Virgin birth, it is contrary to nature. The word of Christ is as powerful in the sacrament as in the creation itself (De Myst. 51.52, CSEL 73, p. 111). It is thought that Ambrose derived the idea of a conversion of the elements at the time of consecration from his study of Greek authors where it is to be found earlier.²⁵

It is Christ's flesh that is eaten, but not simply the flesh that he received from Mary for it is designated also living bread from heaven and 'flesh did not come down from heaven.' The bread has become the vehicle of Christ's divine essence and it is this which the communicant receives.

Ambrose has used the questioning attitude of Christ's audience in John vi as the means of introducing his answer to the questioning he foresees among his own hearers. He wished to explain the materialistic terms in which the Church spoke of the sacrament and the Johannine passage with its 'hard saying' is the one on which he draws.

Although he says it is the sacrament of Christ's flesh, the true flesh which was crucified (De Myst. 53, CSEL 73, p. 112), he maintains

25. F.H. Dudden, op. cit., p. 647; J.H. Srawley, op. cit., p. 37.

it is a spiritual body (De Myst. 58, CSEL 73, p. 115). In the De Fide, speaking of the eucharist and quoting Jn vi.55, he wrote (*supra* p. 180):

Hear his own words: 'A spirit has not flesh and bones.'
 Now as often as we receive the sacramental elements
 which by the mysterious efficacy of holy prayer are
 transfigured (*transfigurantur*) into the flesh and the
 blood, we do show the Lord's death.
 (De Fide IV.124, CSEL 78, p. 201)

It was to reassure his disciples of the reality of his body after the resurrection that Jesus used the words quoted by Ambrose (Lk xxiv.39). The latter seems to imply therefore that in the spiritual body of the eucharist we should not look for flesh and bones, or flesh and blood, such as the disciples acknowledged the risen Jesus to have but yet recognize the true presence of the body under the appearance of bread and wine.

Hitchcock argues that Ambrose did not hold views comparable to the doctrine of transubstantiation, though his rejection of Ambrose's authorship of both De Sacramentis and De Mysteriis relieves him of the most significant evidence against his stand.²⁶ Apart from these two works it may not be possible to assert that Ambrose held a theory of conversion in respect of the elements, but when these works are accepted as his, as seems reasonable from the recent studies devoted to them, then that he held a doctrine that involved some very radical change can hardly be denied. Ambrose, like his contemporary Cyril of Jerusalem, has advanced beyond the ideas of the writers of the earlier centuries of the Church. Dudden sees his teaching as "the starting-

26. F.R.M. Hitchcock, "The Holy Communion in Ambrose of Milan" CQR 140, 1945, 127-153.

point of that train of thought which ultimately resulted in the formulation of the doctrine of Transubstantiation by the Council of the Lateran in 1216 (sic)".²⁷

27. F.H. Dudden, op. cit., p. 647; M.D. Knowles "Fourth Lateran Council" EB 6, (London, 1964), p. 637, gives the date as 1215.

VIII. FIFTH CENTURY COMMENTATORS

Augustine

As one might readily expect of a writer the majority of whose works were one long commentary on Scripture, Augustine has provided in the De Doctrina Christiana and in occasional remarks elsewhere a statement of the principles of interpretation by which he worked. The great principle underlying his whole understanding of Scripture was a belief in its inspiration by the Holy Spirit and consequently its freedom from error, its inner consistency and its agreement with the faith professed by the catholic Church, (Contra Adim. iii, vii, CSEL 25, pp. 121, 130; Epis. lxxxii.3.7, CSEL 34.2, pp. 354, 356f; Contra Faust. xi.5, CSEL 25, pp. 320f; De Doc.Chr. iii.2, CCSL 32, p. 78).

He regarded the fact that there were to be found in Scripture not only clear and simple passages but obscure and enigmatic ones also as a wise provision of God.

Some of the expressions are so obscure as to shroud the meaning in the thickest darkness. And I do not doubt that all this was divinely arranged for the purpose of subduing pride by toil, and of preventing a feeling of satiety in the intellect which generally holds in small esteem what is discovered without difficulty ... What is attended with difficulty in the seeking gives greater pleasure in the finding ... Accordingly the Holy Spirit has, with admirable wisdom and care for our welfare, so arranged the Holy Scriptures as by the plainer passages to satisfy our hunger and by the more obscure to stimulate our appetite. For almost nothing is dug out of those obscure passages which may not be found set forth in the plainest language elsewhere.

(De Doc. Chr. ii.7.8, CCSL 32, p. 35f)

From the last statement it follows that the obscure passages are to be interpreted by reference to the plainer ones (De Doc. Chr. ii.14, CCSL

32, p. 40f).

Augustine's belief in the truth and consistency of the whole body of Scripture would not be shaken by the presence of the obscure and the contradictory. He well understood that error and misconceptions were the result of exaggerating one side of a truth while disregarding other aspects of it (De Fide et Oper. v, CSEL 41, p. 40f). When confronted by difficult or conflicting texts he sought for some explanation that would not endanger their integrity.

If in these writings I am perplexed by anything which appears to me opposed to truth I do not hesitate to suppose that either the manuscript is faulty, or the translator has not caught the meaning of what was said, or I myself have failed to understand it.

(Epis. lxxxii.3, CSEL 34.2, p. 354)

He was therefore prepared to use a certain degree of textual criticism. But the method to which he turned again and again when in difficulty was that of allegory. He had been helped to overcome his own scruples against the claims made by the Church for its sacred literature, especially the Old Testament, by listening to the allegorical interpretations of Ambrose of Milan and so came to appreciate the value of that mode of exegesis in meeting the criticisms both within and without the Church and in eliminating perplexing questions of meaning.¹ In determining whether a text ought to be interpreted literally or by means of allegory, he applied the following rule: "Whatever there is in the Word of God that cannot, when taken literally, be referred either to purity of life or the truth of the faith, you may set down as figurative" (De Doc. Chr. iii.14, CCSL 32, p. 86). "Whenever

1. Conf. v.24, CSEL 33, p. 111; cf B. Altaner, Patrology ET H.C. Graef (Edinburgh, 1960), p. 490.

the writer of Scripture attributes to God or holy men sayings or deeds which would appear sinful to the ordinary man, he is speaking figuratively" (De Doc. Chr. iii.18, CCSL 32, p. 83). He further explained his meaning, using an illustration from the chapter of the Fourth Gospel with which we are concerned.

If the sentence is one of command, either forbidding a crime or vice, or enjoining an act of prudence or benevolence, it is not figurative. If, however, it seems to enjoin a crime or vice, or to forbid an act of prudence or benevolence, it is figurative. 'Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man,' says Christ, 'and drink his blood, you have no life in you' (Jn vi.53). This seems to enjoin a crime or a vice; it is therefore a figure, enjoining that we should have a share in the sufferings of our Lord, and that we should retain a sweet and profitable memory of the fact that his flesh was wounded and crucified for us.

(De Doc. Chr. iii.24, CCSL 32, p. 91f)

Even when he allegorized the biblical narrative, he did not always deny the truth of the passage taken as written (De Doc. Chr. iii.20, CCSL 32, p. 90; Serm. ii.7, CCSL 41, p. 14). Gilmore, however, would remind us that in the thinking of Augustine and his world the literal meaning was a more restricted matter than it is for us today. He gives, as examples of phrases which would not be considered literal by the ancient world, such common expressions as 'downcast eyes' and 'my thoughts ran.'² Augustine's definition of a figurative expression would, in fact, cover such phrases: "Wherever one thing is said with the intention that another should be understood we have a figurative expression" (De Doc. Chr. iii.56, CCSL 32, p. 115). Augustine recognized

2. A.A. Gilmore, "Augustine and the Critical Method" HTR 39, 1946, 147, fn 23; cf also *supra* p.75, fn. 29.

that many expressions of that kind would be readily understood (De Doc. Chr. iii.40,41, CCSL 32, p. 100f). To interpret a passage figuratively was not therefore to introduce something strange or unusual into Scripture. It was merely a matter of degree between those figures which were readily intelligible and those which were more obscure. As we have observed, the obscurity was even beneficial, since its purpose was to stimulate the seeker in his search for truth (De Doc. Chr. ii.8, CCSL 32, p. 36).

There was a time when Augustine was thought to have held the idea that a passage of Scripture in its literal understanding might contain more than one sense. That theory depended, however, upon a misinterpretation of what Augustine had written regarding the multiple meanings in a passage. As Comeau indicates, it is not in the literal sense of the Scripture that he asserted a plurality of meanings but in its possible spiritual interpretation.³

If an obscure passage was to be allegorized, there was no necessity to restrict it to only one interpretation. Any one which did not conflict with the faith of the Church was valid.

When, again, not some one interpretation, but two or more are put upon the words of Scripture, even though the meaning the writer intended remain undiscovered, there is no danger if it can be shown from other passages of Scripture that any of the interpretations put on the words is in harmony with the truth. And if a man in searching the Scriptures endeavours to get at the intention of the author through whom the Holy Spirit spoke, whether he succeeds in this endeavour, or whether he draws a different meaning from the words, but one that is not

3. M. Comeau, Saint Augustine Exégète du Quatrième Évangile (Paris, 1930), p. 102; cf also M. Pontet, L'Exégèse de S. Augustin Prédicateur (Paris, 1944), p. 139.

opposed to sound doctrine, he is free from blame so long as he is supported by the testimony of some other passage of Scripture.

(De Doc. Chr. iii.38, CCSL 32, p. 99f)

That left the exegete a rather free hand to indulge his fancies as Augustine's interpretations of part of John vi will show. Augustine would have insisted, however, that the powers of intellect and imagination he brought to bear upon a text were under the control of the Spirit and could not be thought, therefore, to produce mere human fantasies.

For the author perhaps saw that this very meaning lay in the words which we are trying to interpret; and assuredly the Holy Spirit, who through him spoke these words, foresaw that this interpretation would occur to the reader, or rather, made provision that it should occur to him, seeing that it too is founded on truth. For what more liberal and more fruitful provision could God have made in regard to the sacred Scriptures than that the same words might be understood in several senses, all of which are sanctioned by the concurring testimony of other passages equally divine?

(De Doc. Chr. iii.38, CCSL 32, p. 100)

It was to a similar type of guidance by the Holy Spirit that he attributed the readings of the Septuagint which differed from their Hebrew original. He held the translators to have been inspired by the same Spirit who had guided the writers of the Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint was, therefore, not to be superseded by a new and more faithful rendering of the Hebrew text.

For the same Spirit who was in the prophets when they spoke these things was also in the seventy men when they translated them, so that assuredly they could also say something else, just as if the prophet himself had said both, because it would be the same Spirit who said both, and could say the same thing differently, so that although the words were not the same, yet the same meaning should shine forth to those of good understanding, and could omit or add something, so that even by this it might be

shown that there was in that work not human bondage, which the translators owed to the words, but rather divine power which filled and ruled the mind of the translator.

(De Civ. Dei xviii.43, CSEL 40, p. 337)

He seems never to have attributed to Latin translations of the New Testament quite this same degree of inspiration, for although he recognized that varying translations sometimes shed light upon a passage (De Doc. Chr. ii.17, CCSL 32, p. 43), he also warned his readers against those which gave a false rendering which affected the meaning of a passage, advocating correction of such texts by reference to the original Greek (De Doc. Chr. ii.18, CCSL 32, p. 44).

Augustine studied Scripture to discover the thoughts and purpose of its writers and through them the purpose or will of God (De Doc. Chr. ii.6, CCSL 32, p. 35). Since the writers were divinely inspired, these two conceptions of its meaning, the writer's own and God's intention, could never be at variance. Gilmore has shown that Augustine readily commended and used in his exegesis whatever critical methods were available to him, methods which appear to indicate, in germ at least, "a sound appreciation of modern critical method."⁴ The principles to which he refers are: the relevance of the text to matters of time, place and person (De Doc. Chr. iii.19, CCSL 32, p. 89), the distinction between general commands and those addressed to specific persons and groups (De Doc. Chr. iii.25, CCSL 32, p. 93), the different meanings that must be placed upon a specific word in different contexts (De Cons. Evang. ii.72, CSEL 43, p. 176), comparison of manuscripts and

4. A.A. Gilmore, op. cit., p. 147.

resort to the original language (De Civ. Dei xv.13, CSEL 40, p. 86). Augustine knew and used the rule that the more difficult reading is to be preferred (De Cons. Evang. iii.29, CSEL 43, p. 304f). But Gilmore goes on to show that Augustine did not feel bound to accept the conclusion that the application of critical methods produced. If the conclusion so reached was unwelcome, at variance with the faith and belief of the Church, an allegorical interpretation was invoked to discover the meaning of the text. Augustine did not altogether repudiate critical methods in favour of allegory, but he would not allow the Scripture to be under their control.⁵

At the beginning of his sermons on the Fourth Gospel Augustine remarks that, although the writer is a 'mountain', that is, an elevated soul, who has drunk instruction from the Lord on whose breast he had lain, the subject is so high and ineffable that even John was unable to do justice to it.

Because he was inspired he said something; if he had not been inspired, he would have said nothing; but as he was a man inspired, he spoke not the whole as it is, but what a man could he spoke.

(Tract. in Joh. i.1, CCSL 36, p. 1)

With the other evangelists, whom he describes as writing of the Lord's doings and sayings which are concerned with moulding conduct in the present life, he contrasts John as one who recorded with greater care and detail the Lord's discourses which were intended to teach a knowledge of the Trinity and of the life eternal (De Cons. Evang. i.8, CSEL 43, p. 8f). He commends the choice of the eagle as a suitable

5. Ibid., pp. 146-162.

symbol for John (Rev. iv.7) because he "soars like an eagle above the clouds of human infirmity and gazes upon the light of the unchangeable truth with those keenest and steadiest eyes of the heart" (De Cons. Evang. 1.9, CSEL 43, p. 10).

In his Harmony of the Gospels when Augustine examines the miracle of the feeding of the multitude, which is common to them all, he takes the opportunity to set down rules that could be applied in similar cases to show the harmony between varying accounts of the same incident. As the basis of his discussion he takes the account of John "by whom the narrative in question is told with such particularity as to record even the names of the disciples with whom the Lord conversed on this subject" (De Cons. Evang. 11.95, CSEL 43, p. 202).

No difficulty arises for Augustine from the mere fact that one writer records what has been omitted by another. The problem is that the conversation which John relates is not the same as in the other Gospels. Since the task is to show how they may all be true, Augustine dovetails the accounts together. The conversation opened, he suggests, as recorded by Matthew xiv.15,16 after which Jesus inquired of Philip where bread might be obtained and was informed of the supply on hand. Philip and Andrew are to be understood to speak as the mouthpiece of all the rest, although the other evangelists "may have put the plural number in place of the singular according to a very frequent usage" (De Cons. Evang. 11.96, CSEL 43, p. 204). Matthew, Mark and Luke record only scraps of the full conversation, sufficient to carry the essential meaning. The story of the event becomes, therefore, an illustration of the principle Augustine had previously stated in a more general

way, that the truth of an author's record of the spoken word did not depend altogether on his reporting the actual words of the speaker as they occurred. He had written:

We ought not to suppose that any one of the writers is giving an unreliable account, if, when several persons are recalling some matter either heard or seen by them, they fail to follow the very same plan or to use the very same words while describing, nevertheless, the self-same fact. Neither should we indulge such a supposition, although the order of the words may be varied, or although some words may be substituted in place of others which, nevertheless, have the same meaning, or although something may be left unsaid, either because it has not occurred to the mind of the recorder or because it becomes readily intelligible from other statements that are given ... or although, with the view of illustrating his meaning and making it thoroughly clear, the person to whom authority is given to compose the narrative makes some addition of his own, not indeed in the subject matter itself but in the words by which it is expressed, or although while retaining a perfectly reliable comprehension of the fact itself he may not be entirely successful, however he may make it his aim, in calling to mind and reciting anew with the most literal accuracy the very words which he heard on the occasion.

(De Cons. Evang. ii.28, CSEL 43. pp. 127ff)

Augustine continues to harmonize the account noting that whereas John states that Jesus was on a mountain with the crowd, Matthew says that he went up into a mountain when the crowd was dispersed. Augustine says: "It is surely evident that they had come down from the mountain to more level ground when those loaves were provided for the crowds" (De Cons. Evang. ii.100, CSEL 43, p. 208). In Matthew Jesus commands his disciples to go by boat across the lake whereas John merely states that they departed thus after Jesus had left them in order to pray. Augustine remarks:

Who will not perceive that, in recapitulating the facts, John has spoken of something as actually done at a later point by the disciples which Jesus had already charged them to do before his own departure into the mountain, just as it is a familiar procedure in discourse to revert in some fashion or other to any matter which otherwise would have been passed over? But inasmuch as it may not be specifically noted that a reversion, especially when done briefly and instantaneously, is made to something omitted, the auditors are sometimes led to suppose that the occurrence which is mentioned at the later stage also took place literally at the later period.

(De Cons. Evang. ii.100, CSEL 43, p. 208)

It is in this manner that Augustine works through the four Gospels fitting them into one another and explaining away as best he can their discrepancies.

When he comes to preach upon this same miracle, he finds the narrative fraught with hidden meanings and in a quite straightforward and confident way proceeds to make them plain. On the concept of miracle itself, he remarks:

Truly the government of the whole world is a greater miracle than the satisfying of five thousand men with five loaves, and yet no man marvels at the one. The other men marvel at, not because it is greater, but because it is rare. For who is he that even now feeds the whole world, but he that from a few grains creates whole harvests?

(Tract. in John. xxiv.1, CCSL 36, p. 244)

However, just as in examining a piece of handwriting we should not only admire the well formed letters, but seek to read and understand what is written by them, so we should not only admire the greatness of the deed, but penetrate its depth of meaning. As one who looks at writing in a foreign tongue, we need someone who can decipher it for us (Tract. in Joh. xxiv.2, CCSL 36, p. 244f). Augustine then assumes the role of such a translator.

The five loaves are understood to mean the five books of Moses. With good reason are they not wheaten but barley loaves because they belong to the Old Testament. You know that such is the nature of barley that its kernel is hard to get at, for the kernel is set in a coating of husk, and the husk is tenacious and adheres closely, so that it requires labour to strip it off. Such is the letter of the Old Testament enveloped in a covering of carnal sacraments, but then if one gets at its kernel, it feeds and satisfies. Well, a certain lad was carrying five loaves and two fish. If we seek who this lad was, perhaps it was the people Israel, which in its childishness of mind carried, did not eat. For the things carried, while shut up, were a burden; when opened, they fed. As for the two fish, they seem to us to signify those two sublime persons in the Old Testament which were anointed for the sanctifying and governing of the people, that is, the persons of the Priest and of the King. And that same person did in the mystery come at last who was signified by both these. He came at last who by the kernel of the barley was betokened while by the husk of the barley he was concealed.

(Tract. in Joh. xxiv.5, CCSL 36, p. 246)

Augustine describes Christ's saving work on the cross and then remarking: "Nothing therefore is idle, everything is significant, only it requires one who understands," continues his allegorical treatment of the story. The number of the people represent those under the Law which was unfolded in five books. Sitting upon the grass signifies resting in carnal things for 'All flesh is grass'. The fragments are more hidden truths which the people cannot receive, but are entrusted to the apostles who will later teach them. He ends his sermon by referring to the reaction of the crowd who hailed Jesus as a prophet, indicating the inseparable relationship between prophecy and the word of God (Tract. in Joh. xxiv.6,7, CCSL 36, pp. 246ff).

Comeau says that the miracles interest Augustine less as proofs of Christ's divinity than as parables in action, and that the

mystery which he almost always sees symbolized in them is the Church.⁶

The sermon from which the above has been taken is one of a series which Augustine preached on the Fourth Gospel. On another occasion he preached upon the same passage in briefer form but using much the same interpretation. The miracle is again compared with the marvel of seed-time and harvest. The loaves, the barley, the number of the people fed, the two fish, are explained in the same way. For the fish he gives two alternative meanings as well; they may signify the two precepts of love for God and for our neighbour, or the two people of the circumcision and the uncircumcision. Numbers appear to have been used as keys to unlock the hidden meaning and any one key, that is, any one number, could unlock many doors. The baskets are said to be the twelve apostles "who themselves were filled with the fragments of the Law". Augustine says he has thus broken bread for his hearers, for "as these things are explained, they are broken; when they are understood, they are eaten," (Serm. cxxx.1, PL XXXVIII.725).

This provides him with a transition to the bread which came down from heaven which men could not receive except for the incarnation, "for if he had not been made man, we should not have his flesh; if we had not his flesh, we should not eat the bread of the altar ... Let us long for the life of Christ seeing we hold as an earnest the death of Christ" (Serm. cxxx.2, PL XXXVIII.726). Man's redemption is described under several metaphors. Then follows some Christological doctrine and a long section on the promises of God, those that have been fulfilled providing assurance for the fulfilment of those not yet realized. The discourse ends with a description of the security that

6. M. Comeau, op. cit., p. 145.

awaits the Christian in the world to come. Augustine has left his text far behind. Indeed, it provided him merely with an opening for his sermon. It is seen, however, that the figurative interpretation he has given to the miracle story in these two sermons, although it allowed for some degree of variation, must have been a fairly constant one for him. Comeau sees this interpretation as indicating the substitution of the Christian Church for the Jewish synagogue.⁷

To show Augustine's exegesis of the sixth chapter of John, we shall take the sermons from his series on John which cover that portion of the Gospel as the basis of our exposition, adding also from time to time thoughts which he expresses elsewhere on passages contained in the chapter.

In the sermon which follows the one on the miracle Augustine continues the allegorical treatment of the chapter. On Christ's refusal of kingship at the hands of the crowd, Augustine says they wished to forestall the time of his kingdom, not being content to await its manifestation at the time appointed by God. That Jesus escaped (fugit) from the crowd to the mountain seems to Augustine to be done mystically, not of necessity, for he soon returned to the same crowd but was not seized by them then. It means, therefore, that his loftiness could not be understood by them, just as one says of something that is not understood, 'It escapes me' (fugit me), (Tract. in Joh. xxv.2.3.4, CCSL 36, pp. 248ff).

The ship in which the disciples crossed the lake by night signifies for Augustine the Church in the darkness of the world, filled

7. Ibid., p. 151.

as it is with terror, iniquity, infidelity and hatred. "Well might it be dark, because the Light had not come" (Tract. in Joh. xxv.5, CCSL 36, p. 250). Even so, Augustine implies, Christ's second coming is delayed but the ship of the Church does not founder but keeps moving.

Numbers again intrigue him. One of the features of his exegesis which seems most foreign to the modern understanding of Scripture is this interest in the mystical meaning to be derived from numbers. The following shows to what fantastic lengths it could carry him.

It would have sufficed to say twenty-five stadia, sufficed to say thirty, especially as it is said conjecturally, not affirmatively. Surely the truth would not have been imperilled in a matter of conjectural estimate if he had said about thirty or about twenty-five stadia. But he has made thirty out of twenty-five. Let us look for the number twenty-five: of what does it consist, of what is it made? Of the number five. That number five pertains to the Law. The books of Moses are also five; also those five porches containing the ailing folk (Jn v.2); also the five loaves feeding five thousand men. So then the number twenty-five signifies the Law, because five by five, that is, five times five makes twenty-five, or five squared. But the Law before the Gospel came lacked perfection. Now perfection is comprised in the number six. Therefore in six days God perfected the world, and the five are multiplied by six that the Law may be filled up by the Gospel, that six times five becomes thirty. To them therefore who fulfil the Law comes Jesus, pressing down with his feet the swelling waves ... He presses down the lofty of the world that he may be glorified by the lowly.

(Tract. in Joh. xxv.6.7, CCSL 36, p. 251)

Pontet, however, seems to think that a mystical interpretation of such numbers is justified "parce que, symboliste lui-même, saint Jean colore chaque nombre d'un sens particulier à chaque passage." He thinks its correct interpretation forms the key to the meaning of the passage.⁸ While numerical symbolism may play some part in John's

8. M. Pontet, op. cit., p. 569.

thought, it is neither so pervasive nor so important as Pontet affirms. In any case Augustine makes too much of it. Comeau traces Augustine's numeric symbolism to the exegesis of the Alexandrian School and ultimately to the ideas of Pythagoras. She remarks that 'numerus' signified both 'number' and 'harmony' and was thus the law both of the world of sense and of the world of spirit. Of all the fathers she finds in his work the subtlest and most copious treatment of the subject.⁹

Augustine makes useful application of his text to the life of his congregation, as exemplified in the ship-Church metaphor and again when he sees the multitude who follow seeking a further miracle of bread as a type of many in the Church. "How many seek Jesus for no other purpose but that he may do them good in this present time!" He describes those who apply to the clergy for help of one kind or another in their temporal affairs and paraphrases Jesus' reply to the people (Jn vi.27) thus: "You seek me for the sake of something else; seek me for myself" (Tract. in Joh. xxv.10, CCSL 36, p. 252).

The saying about the sealing of the Son by the Father (Jn vi.27) appears to have interested many of the commentators on John. Augustine explains:

To seal is to put a mark upon a thing. When you put a mark upon anything the reason why you put it is lest it be so confounded with others that you may not be able to recognize it ...(quoting Ps xlv.7)... Then what is it to seal? To have him taken out from others, that is, 'above your fellows'. Therefore, he says, do not despise me because I am Son of man ...

9. M. Comeau, op. cit., p. 127f.

the Father ... has given me something peculiarly mine,
that I should not be confounded with mankind, but
through me should mankind be delivered.

(Tract. in Joh. xxv.11, CCSL 36, p. 253f)

Verse 29 provides Augustine with an opportunity to proclaim the doctrine of justification by faith drawing upon a number of Pauline texts (Rom. iii.28, x.4, Gal. v.6). "Why make ready the teeth and the belly? Believe and you have eaten." (Tract. in Joh. xxv.12, CCSL 36, p. 254). This phrase has been taken as a spiritual interpretation of the eucharistic eating. Hebert considers it particularly clear.¹⁰ Bethune-Baker cites it when discussing Augustine's understanding of the eucharist.¹¹ Bettenson prints it under the heading 'The Eucharist', sub-titled 'Spiritual Food and Drink.'¹² Yet in this long sermon Augustine is not really giving an interpretation of the sacrament. He refers again and again to the meat that endures, he refers to Christ as the true bread prefigured in the manna, he says that 'shall never hunger' and 'shall never thirst' have the same meaning, drawing by way of illustration on the story of the Samaritan woman (Jn iv.14.15) and her desire for the living water, an incident which has no eucharistic symbolism. Christ is presented under the terms 'bread' and 'meat' as that which they should desire to receive, but in his own person rather than as the bread of the eucharist. Within the context of this sermon Augustine appears to mean by this phrase that what God desires of man is not primarily some outward act or work, in-

10. C. Hebert, op. cit., p. 274.

11. J.F. Bethune-Baker, op. cit., p. 417, fn 1.

12. H. Bettenson, The Later Christian Fathers, p. 247.

cluding no doubt participation in the sacraments, but the faith from which good works flow, and would include also the idea that man ought not to come to Christ in anticipation of temporal benefits but only looking for those which are signified by the term 'eternal life.' He is not giving eucharistic doctrine as such in this sermon and insofar as the concept of eating the bread of life can ever be understood apart from the eucharistic eating in an exposition of this chapter by the fathers, it is so understood here. The whole sermon from this point on dwells on the humility with which man must come to Christ and the security and joy that await him there (Tract. in Joh. xxv.13.14, CSEL 36, p. 255). In another homily, however, we find practically the same phrase, "Do not get your mouth ready, but your heart" (Serm. cxii.5, PL XXXVIII.645), in what is an invitation to come to the Lord's table. It is there used as a rebuke to those who will not believe without the confirmation of the senses. Augustine refers to Thomas who wished his doubts removed by sight and touch.

Elsewhere John vi.41 is quoted in conjunction with a use of eating and drinking as a metaphor for the assimilation of teaching. Having recounted the story of Jesus' visit to the home of Martha and Mary (Lk x.33-42), Augustine wishes to show wherein the part chosen by Mary is the better. Martha's part, ministering to the needs of others, would be taken away when the necessity for such service ceased; Mary's part would not be taken from her because she was hungry and thirsting for righteousness.

As she sat at the Lord's feet in her hunger Mary received some crumbs, for the Lord gave then only as much as she

was able to receive ... Hungering she was eating, thirsting she was drinking the truth. She was at once being refreshed with it and that with which she was fed was not diminished ... I venture to say, she was eating him whom she was hearing. For if she was eating the truth, did he not say himself, 'I am the Truth?' ... He was eaten because he was the Bread. 'I', he says, 'am the living Bread which came down from heaven.' This is the bread which refreshed the failing but does not itself fail... If we feed on crumbs now, shall we not then have a full table? ... What Mary chose then was increasing, not passing away.

(Serm. clxxix.5.6, PL XXXVIII.969f)

In the next Sermon of the series on John Augustine is dealing with the passage up to verse 59 and in it provides a eucharistic interpretation of the eating and drinking. It begins, however, with a repetition of the idea we have already examined. Augustine says: "To believe in him, this it is to eat the living bread; he who believes eats; invisibly he is fed to the full, because invisibly born again" (Tract. in Joh. xxvi.1, CCSL 36, p. 260). After an extended exposition of what it means to be drawn by the Father,¹³ he begins to explain verses 43 and 49, and sees the eating of the manna in relation to the eating of the eucharistic bread. There were those who ate manna and died, but some, such as Moses, Aaron, and Phinehas, because of their spiritual understanding of the manna, were preserved from spiritual death. Even so, of those who take the sacrament, there are some who live and others who die because of their spiritual discernment or lack of it.

This then is the bread that comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die. But because it pertains to the virtue of the sacrament, not because it pertains to

13. *Infra* p. 212.

the visible sacrament; he who eats inwardly, not outwardly, he who eats in the heart, not he who presses with his teeth.

(Tract. in Joh. xxvi.12, CCSL 36, p. 266)

Augustine does not dwell on the concept of the bread as the flesh of Christ. He seems almost to dismiss it with a brief play on the two senses of the word called forth by the Jews' horror at the idea: "That is called flesh which flesh does not receive; for this reason all the more the flesh does not receive it, because it is called flesh" (Tract. in Joh. xxvi.13, CCSL 36, p. 266). Such a play on words is a not uncommon feature of Augustine's preaching.¹⁴

He goes on to speak at greater length of the faithful as the body of Christ. As man's spirit is the vivifying force in his body, so the body of Christ lives only by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in it. Then, following a rather prosaic and laboured distinction between eternal and temporal life as an explanation of verse 53, he continues:

By this meat and drink, then, he would have to be understood the fellowship of his body and members ... The sacrament of this thing, that is, the unity of the body and blood of Christ ... is on the Lord's table prepared, and from the Lord's table taken, by some to life, by some to destruction, but the reality of which it is the sacrament is for every man to life, for none to destruction, whoever shall be a partaker of it.

(Tract. in Joh. xxvi.15, CCSL 36, p. 267)

Again, speaking of the meat and drink whose effect is immortality, he describes it as "the very fellowship of saints where there shall be peace and unity." This fellowship is likened to the bread which out of many grains becomes one loaf and the wine which is the product of

14. Cf. *supra* p. 200 where the double sense of 'fugit' is made the basis of his interpretation.

many berries (Tract. in Joh. xxvi.17, CCSL 36, p. 268).¹⁵ Of the two concepts understood in the term 'the body of Christ', that of the Church is predominant over that of sacramental bread. It would seem that Augustine's chief purpose is to contrast the eternal life which is God's gift to those who dwell through faith in the body of Christ with the fate awaiting those who eat without faith. The gift is not something that follows of necessity upon the physical participation in the sacrament. The necessity of faith and the possibility of receiving the eucharist without it are stressed so that no one may put confidence in the sacrament in a purely mechanical way. This warning is brought out through reference to those who ate manna, some to die, some to live, through quoting Paul's warning to those who eat unworthily (I Cor. xi.29, Tract. in Joh. xxvi.11, CCSL 36, p. 265), and by contrasting life and destruction as the alternatives placed before those who take the eucharist.

In the sermon which follows upon this Augustine expounds the verses from 59 to the end of the chapter. To be carnally minded, that is, to understand according to the flesh, is death (Rom. viii.6) when the Lord gives his flesh to be eaten, calling it eternal life; therefore, "even the flesh we must not understand according to the flesh" (Tract. in Joh. xxvii.1, CCSL 36, p. 270). In another place he had said of Jesus' saying about his flesh and blood (vs 53), "It is hard, but only to the hard; it is incredible, but only to the incredulous" (Serm. cxxxi.1, PL XXXVIII.730).

15. This symbolism for unity is found as early as Cyprian, Epis. lxiii and lxxvii.

He interprets the saying of verse 63 in this way:

They understood the flesh as it is divided piecemeal in a dead body, or as sold in the market, not as it is quickened by the Spirit. Therefore, 'the flesh profits nothing' is said in like manner as it is said, 'knowledge puffs up' (I Cor. viii.1). Should we then immediately hate knowledge? God forbid. And what is 'knowledge puffs up'? Of itself, without charity. Add then to knowledge charity and knowledge shall be profitable, not through itself but through charity. So also now 'the flesh profits nothing', but the flesh by itself. Let the Spirit be added to the flesh as charity is added to knowledge and it profits very much. For if the flesh profits nothing, the Word would not have been made flesh, that it might dwell in us. If by means of the flesh Christ has much profited us, how does the flesh profit nothing? But the flesh was the means whereby the Spirit acted for our salvation. The flesh was a vessel; mark what it had, not what it was. The apostles were sent; did their flesh not profit us? If the flesh of the apostles profited us, can it be that the flesh of the Lord profited nothing? For whence came to us the sound of the Word but by the voice of the flesh? Whence the pen of the writer, whence the writing? These all are works of the flesh, but by the Spirit actuating, as one may say, his organ.

(Tract. in Joh. xxvii.5, CCSL 36, p. 272)

As man's spirit vitalizes only those members that are joined to the body, so the Holy Spirit vivifies only those who are found in the body of Christ. "There is nothing a Christian ought to dread so much as to be separated from the body of Christ." On the latter half of verse 63 Augustine says of the words of Christ: "What means this 'are spirit and life'? Are spiritually to be understood. Have you spiritually understood? They are spirit and life. Have you carnally understood? Even so, those are spirit and life, but not to you"

(Tract. in Joh. xxvii.6, CCSL 36, p. 272f).

Augustine has occasion to draw upon these verses in his exposition of Psalm xcix (xcviii LXX) in order to explain by a process of intricate

exegesis the words 'O magnify the Lord our God and adore his footstool for he is holy' (vs 5). He cites Isaiah lxi.1 to define 'footstool' as the earth, but immediately expresses perplexity that we should be told to worship anything that has been created. His doubts are dispelled when he seeks Christ in the text for he took upon him earth from earth in his birth from Mary. He also gave us his flesh to eat which no one eats without first worshipping.

When you bow yourself prostrate before the 'earth', look not as if to earth, but to the Holy One whose footstool it is you worship ... And when you worship him see that you do not in your thought remain in the flesh and be not quickened by the Spirit.

Verse 63 is then quoted followed by verse 53 in part and an account of the scandal caused by this saying among the followers of Jesus. As Christ's explanation of his words (vs 63) to those who remained, Augustine writes:

Understand spiritually what I have said. You are not to eat this body which you see, not to drink that blood which they who will crucify me will pour forth. I have commended to you a certain mystery. Spiritually understood, it will quicken. Although it is needful that this be visibly celebrated, yet it must be spiritually (invisibiliter) understood.

(Enarr. in Ps xcvi.9, CCL 39, p. 1385f)

Comeau places this passage over against De Doctrina Christiana iii.24 (v. supra p.190) when discussing Augustine's understanding of the eucharist, whether it was realist or symbolic. From the passage in De Doctrina Christiana she deduces that the word 'figure' refers not to the flesh and blood but only to the eating. Of his comment on Psalm xcvi she says:

Augustin indique nettement ici les caractères de l'Eucharistie; c'est l'union au Christ procurée par la manducation figurative du corps sacré, réellement, mais invisiblement, présent dans les espèces visibles qui seules 16 subissent une manducation réelle.

These passages do not appear to support convincingly a realist conception of the eucharistic elements. Batiffol, who also wishes to show a realist conception on the part of Augustine, quotes from Sermo ccxxvii:

Panis ille quem videtis in altari, sanctificatus per verbum Dei, corpus est Christi. Calix ille, immo quod habet calix, sanctificatum per verbum Dei, sanguis est Christi.

(Serm. ccxxvii, PL XXXVIII, 1099)¹⁷

This is more definite. It would indeed be strange if Augustine held a view of the sacrament altogether opposed to that accepted by the Church of his time, such a conception as we find expressed by Ambrose, the bishop whom he held in such high esteem. What is remarkable is the lack of emphasis he places upon that feature of the sacrament. It is its aspect as a symbol of the unity of Christians as the body of Christ that appeals to him and which is repeatedly stressed by him.

In commenting upon verse 64 in his homilies on John, Augustine affirms the priority of believing to understanding. He who will not believe rejects the light by shutting his mind (Tract. in Joh. xxvii.7, CCSL 36, p. 273). In another homily he defines believing as being willing to do God's will, for to do the will of God is to do his work and 'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent (Jn vi.29, Tract. in Joh. xxix.6, CCSL 36, p. 287). Peter's confession

16. M. Comeau, op. cit., p. 181.

17. P. Batiffol, op. cit., p. 428.

confirms this priority.

'We believe and have known'; not have known and believed, but have believed and known. For we believed that we might know, since if we would know first and then believe, we should not be able either to know or to believe. What have we believed and what known? That you are Christ, the Son of God, that is, this eternal life is none other than you and that you give in your flesh and blood none other than what you are.

(Tract. in Joh. xxvii.9, CCSL 36, p. 274)

This idea is expressed by Augustine again and again. In exegeting Psalm lv.21 (ps liv LXX) he says obscure passages of Scripture seem hard until explained and illustrates his meaning by the defection of the disciples at this hard saying (Jn vi.53). Peter's faithfulness is commended: "Did Peter by any means at that time understand the secret of that discourse of the Lord? Not yet did he understand, but he devoutly believed that the words were good which he did not understand" (Enarr. in Ps liv.23, CCSL 39, p. 673f).¹⁸

Augustine was careful to stress that belief in Christ was a gift of God (Serm. cxxxi.2, PL XXXVIII.730). Several of his homilies dwell upon the relationship between God's drawing men to him and man's free will. To those who would say that being drawn to Christ meant believing against the will, he replied that men might be forced against their will to come to Church, to approach the altar and even to receive the sacrament, but could not be compelled to believe unwillingly. "If we believed with the body, men could be made to believe against their will, but believing is not a thing done with the body" (Tract. in Joh. xxvi.2, CCSL 36, p. 260).

18. For a further instance of Tract. in Joh. xxix.6, CCSL 36, p. 287.

Having affirmed free will he then seeks to explain Jn vi.44. The mind is drawn not by force but by love. Men are drawn not just by the will but by pleasure. Men are drawn to Christ when they delight in truth, blessedness, righteousness, everlasting life. Only those who long for such things, says Augustine, really understand what he is saying. Those who are drawn by the Father are those who believe Christ to be his Son, equal with him. Arius and Photinus are cited as examples of men who were not drawn. The Father's drawing is the revealing of this equality and Sonship (Mt xvi.17 cited). This same meaning may be put upon the phrase 'taught of God' (Jn vi.45).

Even if they hear from men, yet what they understand is given within, enlightens within, reveals within ... I only carry into your ears a noise of words. Then unless he who is within reveals, what do I say, what do I speak? ... See in what way the Father draws; by teaching he delights, not by putting a necessity upon men.

(Tract. in Joh. xxvi.4.5.7, CCSL 36
p. 261ff)

He then poses the question, 'Did Christ not teach?' and replies:

Christ spoke but the Father taught. I myself, being a man, whom do I teach? Whom, brethren, but him that has heard my word? If I, being a man, teach him who hears my word, the Father also teaches that man who hears his Word ... Learn to be drawn to the Son by the Father. Let the Father teach you. Hear his Word. ... How are men being in the flesh to hear such a Word? Because the Word was made flesh.

(Tract. in Joh. xxvi.8, CCSL 36, p. 263)

After this word play Augustine expounds the incarnation, its purpose and effect for believers.

In another place, speaking again on the subject of the drawing of God, he says, "Believe and you have come, love and you are drawn", but warns against imputing our coming to ourselves. Humility is the

mark of him who is drawn by God (Serm. cxxxi.2,3, PLXXXVIII.730).

After reading such passages in which the drawing of God is seen as the attraction of teaching and of love, it seems strange to find Augustine interpreting this same verse, 'No man can come to me except the Father draw him' in a context in which he supports the forcible conversion of Donatists to the Catholic Church. In this case he speaks of the Father drawing them through fear of the wrath of God. He asserts that Christ by great violence coerced Saul upon the Damascus Road and quotes the words of the parable 'Whomever you shall find, compel them to come in' (Lk xiv.23; Epis. xciii.5, CSEL 34, p. 449f).

Another aspect of his views on the use of force appears in a letter to a Donatist presbyter who had regarded the desertion of the disciples (Jn vi.66) as teaching that each should be left to his own choice and not coerced. Augustine writes that at the time of that incident the Church was in its infancy and so could not compel adherence, but now that she wields greater power she may not only invite but compel men. The parable of the great feast is said to teach this with sufficient plainness. The prior injunction, 'bring them in', is said to signify the incipient condition of the Church when it was without power, the later, 'compel them to come in', to refer to its later condition when the Church may resort to force for the good of those who are perverse and rebellious (Epis. clxxiii.10, CSEL 44, p. 647f). Elsewhere Augustine gave his opinion that more schismatics were converted by fear than won by love (Epis. clxxxv.21, CSEL 57, p. 19). Augustine's teaching on the validity of calling on the civil power to aid the Church with force underwent a change in the course of the Donatist controversy,

and it is this modified view that is expressed in this exegesis. Apparently he felt that the end justified the means when the object was the eternal good of men's souls (Epis. clxxxv.3, CSEL 57, p. 7f). He had at first opposed the use of force but was influenced to change his attitude by seeing many former Donatists, so converted, sincerely rejoicing that they had thus been delivered from error (Epis. xciii.16.17, CSEL 34, p. 461f).

The homilies on John vi (xxiv - xxvii) are among those which La Bonnardière dated in two groups after the year 413 (xvii - xxiii and xxiv - liv).¹⁹ Later research, however, has come to place them earlier in Augustine's career. Accepting Wright's demonstration that homilies xx - xxii did not originally form part of this series of sermons at all,²⁰ Berrouard has shown that Tractatus xvii - xix and xxiii - liv were preached as a single series and in all probability during the summer of 414.²¹ Letter xciii, in which Augustine accounts for the change in his attitude to conversion by force, is dated as early as 407 - 408.²² Letter clxxxiii, which distinguishes between the period when the Church was powerless to coerce and that in which she may compel adherence, comes from the very period of the homilies in question, 411 - 414.²³ Letter clxxxv, written to the tribune Boniface, was written in 417.²⁴

19. M.-F. Berrouard, "La date des Tractatus I-LIV in Johannis Evangelium de Saint Augustin" Reca 7, 1971, 107.

20. D.F. Wright, "Tractatus 20-22 of St. Augustine's In Johannem" JTS New Series 15, 1964, 317-330.

21. M.-F. Berrouard, op. cit., pp. 140-168.

22. Al. Goldbacher, ed., CSEL 58, p. 28f.

23. Ibid., p. 45.

24. Ibid., p. 47.

Augustine's exegesis, therefore, cannot represent development or change in his thinking since the letters represent his opinion before, during and after the Johannine homilies. He considers both interpretations valid. In the letter to Boniface the imagery of a father chastising his undisciplined son is used of the Church's resort to force (Epis. clxxxv.21, CSEL 57, p. 20). The implication is that God's love may sometimes have to be expressed through forcible correction, but that when this happens it is nevertheless, still a drawing motivated by love. "The final spontaneous act of the will could be preceded by a long process ... in which elements of fear, of constraint, of external inconvenience are never at any time excluded."²⁵ It was while demonstrating that evil intentions are sometimes expressed in agreeable actions whereas love must sometimes seem harsh and rough that Augustine gave his people the well known precept "Love and do what you will" (Tract. in Epis. Joh. ad Parth. vii.3, PL XXXV.2033). Force, however, may induce men to conform outwardly while their will remains in opposition and then Augustine would agree that they remain chaff amidst the wheat.²⁶ Brown cautions against "the temptation to impose academic consistency on Augustine, a man of mysterious discontinuities, wielding authority in a complex and violent situation".²⁷ Wiles thinks he

25. P. Brown, Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine (London, 1972), p. 270.

26. Cf his ideas *supra* p. 211.

27. P. Brown, op. cit., p. 263.

had set a "disastrous precedent" for the Church of the future.²⁸

Dillistone deplores the fact that Augustine's prestige was a factor in establishing the principle which led in later times to persecution by the Church of those who disagreed with her.²⁹ Brown speaks of the influence which the Old Testament with its elements of harshness and violence exerted upon the thought of the Church from the fifth century onwards, stating that it came to represent "at one and the same time the symbol of an outmoded dispensation and the ever-present precedent for an established religion, enforced by law."³⁰

Augustine considers the question whether Judas may be said to be among the elect.

'Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil?' Should he then have said 'have chosen eleven', or is a devil also chosen, is a devil among the elect? Persons are wont to be called elect as a term of praise, or is it that this man also is elect from whom, unwilling and unwitting, some great good was to be effected? This is proper to God. It is the contrary to what the wicked do. For as wicked men make a bad use of the good works of God, so on the contrary God makes a good use of the bad works of men ... The Artificer puts him to use. If the great Artificer knew not how to put him to use, neither would he have permitted him to be. Therefore, 'one of you is a devil', he says, 'although I have chosen you twelve.'

(Tract. in Joh. xxvii.10, CCSL 36, p. 274f)

Augustine does not say that Judas was destined by God for the role he was to play but merely that his evil deeds were made to serve

28. M.F. Wiles, The Christian Fathers, p. 157.

29. F.W. Dillistone, "The Anti-Donatist Writings" A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine, ed. R.W. Battenhouse (New York, 1955), p. 193.

30. P. Brown, op. cit., p. 274.

God's purposes. He does not indicate whether he interprets 'from the beginning' (vs 64) as antedating Christ's choice of Judas or as denoting the beginning of their association once the choice had been made, although the question 'Is a devil also chosen?' seems to imply Christ's knowledge of his nature at the time of choosing.

An exhortation to humility is drawn from verse 38 through interpreting it as the explanation of verse 37.

Is this then the reason why you do not cast him out who comes to you, that you came down from heaven, not to do your own will but the will of him that sent you? It is indeed so. Why do we ask whether it is so? He himself says so. For it is not right for us to suspect him to mean other than he says.

(Tract. in Joh. xxv.15, CCEL 36, p. 256)

There is then a long dissertation on the text 'The beginning of all sin is pride' (Ecclus x.13) ending with the thought:

That the cause of all diseases might be cured, that is, pride, the Son of God descended and was made low ... Because God teaches humility he said, 'I come not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.' For this is that which bespeaks humility. Pride does its own will, humility does the will of God. Therefore, 'whoever shall come to me I will not cast out.' Why? 'Because I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me.' Lowly am I come, to teach lowliness am I come, as a master of lowliness am I come. Whoever comes to me is incorporated with me. Whoever comes to me becomes lowly. Whoever cleaves to me will be lowly, because he does not do his own will but God's. And, therefore, he is not cast out, because it was only when he was proud that he was cast out.

(Tract. in Joh. xxv.16, CCEL 36, p. 256)

There is a wealth of biblical quotation contrasting the proud and their desserts with the humble and their rewards. Augustine had used this verse in expounding the petition 'Thy will be done' in the Lord's Prayer. It is one of a number of texts that support the statement that

"The will of God is done when his precepts are obeyed" (De Serm. Dom. in Monte ii.21, CSEL 35, p. 111).

A further use is made of verses 51 and 53 in the treatise On Merits and the Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Infants. The Pelagians had affirmed that unbaptized children would receive salvation and eternal life because of their innocence, but in accordance with John iii.3, 5 would not enter the kingdom of heaven. Augustine refutes such teaching on the basis of what the Lord said concerning the sacrament of the Lord's Supper which none but the baptized may approach, quoting the words of John vi.53. To the quibble that these words, expressed in the second person, were therefore addressed to those who could hear and understand, rather than to infants, he replies that, strictly interpreted, they would apply only to those whom Jesus was addressing on that occasion. However, since he had said his flesh was to be given for the life of the world, he must have intended the saying to apply to all who enter the world through birth, and so to include infants (De Pecc. Mer. et Rem. i.26.27, PL XLIV.123f).

Augustine derives from this text, John vi.51, the origin of the Carthaginian practice of calling the sacrament of the Lord's Supper 'life' (De Pecc. Mer. et Rem. i.34, PL XLIV.128f). He further affirms that these statements are unambiguous, absolutely clear and certain, on the authority of God, regarding the necessity of the sacraments for salvation, even of infants (De Pecc. Mer. et Rem. iii.8, PL XLIV.139f). In agreement with this strict view there is evidence for the ancient practice of administering the eucharist to infants (Cyprian De Lapsis xxv, CSEL 3, p. 255).

The daily bread of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer has three possible interpretations, according to Augustine, namely, the necessities of this life, or the sacrament of the body of Christ received daily, or the spiritual food of which Christ spoke in John's Gospel (Jn vi.27, 41 quoted). He proceeds to consider which is the most probable. The first does not satisfy him because it conflicts with other injunctions of the Lord (e.g., Mt vi.25.33). The designation 'daily' seems inappropriate for Christians in places where the eucharist is not celebrated or not received by all daily, and even where it is, would be unsuitable in prayer during the part of the day after participation in the sacrament (De Serm. Dom. in Monte ii.25.26, CCSL 35, pp. 113ff).

It remains therefore that we should understand the daily bread as spiritual, that is to say, divine precepts which we ought daily to meditate and to labour after. For just with respect to these the Lord says, 'Labour for the meat which does not perish' ... But if anyone wishes to understand the sentence before us also of food necessary for the body, or of the sacrament of the Lord's body, we must take all three meanings conjointly, that is to say, that we are to ask for all at once as daily bread, both the bread necessary for the body, and the visible hallowed bread, and the invisible bread of the Word of God.

(De Serm. Dom. in Monte ii.27, CCSL 35, p. 115f)

Another citation of the sixth chapter is to be found in Augustine's explanation of Paul's teaching on grace and works written during the last years of his life.³¹ Having quoted Romans xi.5, 6a, he says:

31. B. Altaner, op. cit., p. 509.

But perhaps it may be said: 'The apostle distinguishes faith from works; he says indeed that grace is not of works, but he does not say that it is not of faith.' This indeed is true. But Jesus says that faith itself also is the work of God, and commands us to work it. For the Jews said to him, 'What shall we do that we may work the work of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent' (Jn vi.28f).³² The apostle therefore distinguishes faith from works, just as Judah is distinguished from Israel in the two kingdoms of the Hebrews, although Judah is Israel itself. And he says that a man is justified by faith and not by works, because faith itself is first given, from which may be obtained other things which are specifically characterized as works in which a man may live righteously. For he himself also says, 'By grace you are saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, but it is the gift of God' (Eph. ii.8), that is to say, 'And in saying "through faith" (I meant) even faith itself is not of yourselves, but is God's gift. Not of works,' he says, 'lest any man should be lifted up.'

(De praedest. sanct. 12, PL XLIV.969f)

After illustrating his meaning from the story of Cornelius (Acts x)

Augustine returns to Jesus' saying (Jn vi.29) and adds verses 36, 37a

What is the meaning of 'shall come to me' but 'shall believe in me'? But it is the Father's gift that this may be the case ... What is the meaning of 'Every man that has heard of the Father and has learned, comes to me' except that there is none that hears of the Father and learns that comes not to me? ... For no one has heard and learned and has not come ... This grace therefore which is hiddenly bestowed in human hearts is rejected by no hard heart, because it is given for the sake of first taking away the hardness of the heart.

(De praedest. sanct. 13, PLXLIV.970f)

Augustine brings forward the text 'He has mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardens' (Rom. ix.18) in contrast with 'They shall all be teachable of God' (Jn vi.45).

32. A verse Augustine used to teach justification by faith in Tract. in Joh. xxv.12, CCSL 36, p. 254, *supra* p.203.

As therefore we speak justly when we say concerning any teacher of literature who is alone in a city, he teaches literature here to everybody - not that all men learn, but that there is none who learns literature there who does not learn from him - so we justly say, God teaches all men to come to Christ, not because all come, but because none comes in any other way.

After citing Romans ix.22f and I Corinthians i.18, Augustine continues

God teaches all such to come to Christ for he wills all such to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. And if he had willed to teach even those to whom the word of the cross is foolishness to come to Christ, beyond all doubt these also would have come. For he neither deceives nor is deceived when he says, 'Everyone that has heard of the Father and has learned comes to me.' Away then with the thought that any one comes not, who has heard of the Father and has learned.

(De Praedest. sanct. 14, PL XLIV.971)

To the question why the gift of faith is not given to all so that all would believe, he can only reply "His judgments are unsearchable and his ways past finding out" but he is sure that God could not will anything unrighteous (Rom. xi.33, De praedest. sanct. 16, PL XLIV.973).

We find in examining this considerable amount of exegesis that Augustine has applied to John's sixth chapter, both in preaching directly upon it and in using its statements to elucidate other passages or to define points of doctrine, that it has exerted a significant stimulation upon his powers of interpretation. The chapter offers him scope for the exposition of some of his most characteristic doctrines: the priority of believing over understanding, justification by faith, predestination as seen in the drawing of the Father as well as an affirmation of man's free will. It exhibits his interest in the mystical significance of number and of highly

developed allegory which is the most marked feature of his exegetical style. Allegory was used by him, in accordance with his theory of inspired interpretation, in full awareness that it did not necessarily uncover the original intention of the author's words. Pontet writes: "Plus que des faits saint Augustin est l'ami des idées, des doctrines; il les voit ou croit les voir dans des textes qui ne les contiennent point."³³ As an exegete Augustine thus exercised great freedom both in respect to his text and in respect to the critical methods he applied, but always felt himself limited and controlled by what was in agreement with the Church's faith. When not involved in far-fetched allegory, his interpretations often reveal a penetrating insight into the meaning of the text. His marked preference for an exegesis of the discourse that is oriented away from any materialistic interpretation of the flesh and blood and towards an emphasis on the believers as the body of Christ in its eucharistic connotations contrasts sharply with much contemporary exegesis of the chapter.³⁴

Pontet points out that much of Augustine's exegesis is to be found in the context of sermons preached, often extemporaneously, on the lection for the day and therefore reflect the atmosphere of worship rather than of the study.³⁵ Comeau says that in the Johannine homilies he did not intend to prepare a learned work.³⁶ The reader of his

33. M. Pontet, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

34. He does not, however, deny other less spiritualized interpretations. He can say realistically of Peter, after his confession of faith, "Good was the savour in his mouth of the flesh of the Lord". Yet, if taken in the context, which is the gospel history, this can only be referred metaphorically to Christ's teaching. Verse 63 is quoted immediately after this statement (*Tract. in Joh. xi.5, CCL 36, p. 113*).

35. M. Pontet, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

36. M. Comeau, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

writings is struck by his command of biblical quotation in an age which did not enjoy the technical aids of the modern concordance. Even such a compilation as Réveillaud has suggested in connection with Cyprian's work (*supra* p. 90) would not account for the ease and facility with which Augustine punctuates his work with texts. Although some of them do not appear to the reader today as appropriate as they undoubtedly did to him, he cannot fail to be amazed by a mind that had achieved such a command of Scripture.

Theodore of Mopsuestia

Quasten has called Theodore "the most typical representative of the Antiochene school of exegesis."³⁷ He had indeed a profound respect for the sober literal meaning of a text and attempted to place the various biblical writings in what seemed to him their true historical background.³⁸ In expounding the prophets, he regarded them as speaking primarily to their own time, while recognizing also in them prophetic references to the work of Christ. He wrote:

However, for this reason most of what appears in the Old Testament is distributed in this manner so that what appears might furnish the greatest help to those living at the time and yet hold a certain reminder of things to be demonstrated clearly only later.

(*In Jonam*, PG LXVI. 320)³⁹

This anchorage in history kept him from the often uncontrolled allegorical interpretations of many of his contemporaries. In his New

37. J. Quasten, Patrology Vol. III, p. 402.

38. R.A. Greer, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Exegete and Theologian (Westminster, 1961), p. 103.

39. ET R.A. Greer, ibid., p. 107.

Testament commentaries particularly he seemed to prefer as a rule a simple explanation of the text. In his exegesis of Galatians he specifically rejected the allegorical method. Commenting on Paul's use of the story of Hagar, which was used by allegorists as authority for their method, he claimed that Paul had not done away with the historical element of the story in making his comparison between the long-past event and the controversy of his own time. Allegorists, on the other hand, Theodore says,

turn everything backwards, since they wish to make no distinction in divine Scripture between what the text says and dreams in the night.

(In Epis. ad Gal. iv.24)⁴⁰

When both type and antitype are well grounded in real events of history Theodore will employ a typological interpretation, but even this he does sparingly and often preserves the more literal sense of the passage as well. Micah v.1,2 he understands as referring both to Zerubbabel, the king at that time, and also to Christ who was still to come (PG LXVI.372).

At the beginning of his commentary on John, preserved in Syriac and in recent times made available in Latin translation, Theodore states what he considers to be the task of the commentator. Unlike a preacher, he does not dwell upon passages easily understood but may feel compelled to expound at length verses which have been misinterpreted by heretics (In Joh. praef.; Vosté, p. 2).

Theodore regarded John's order of events as more reliable than that of the other gospel writers and believed his purpose was to fill in what they had omitted in their accounts of Jesus' life, especially the discourses such as that contained in the sixth chapter, and to add a doctrinal inter-

40. In Epistolas B. Pauli Commentarii Vol. I, ed., H.B. Swete (Cambridge, 1880), p. 74; ET of the passage by R.A. Greer, op. cit., p. 108.

pretation that emphasized Christ's divinity (Vosté, pp. 4 and 93).

Theodore reads the gospel as a whole, including, of course, the incidents of the sixth chapter, as a straightforward narrative of events rather than as a vehicle of hidden doctrinal meanings. It is not intended to imply that he does not derive doctrine from the narrative. His doctrine, however, is always more or less reasonably deduced from the events rather than superimposed allegorically upon them.

Theodore asserts that John repeats the story of the feeding of the five thousand which others had already recounted because of the teaching derived from it by Jesus (Vosté, p. 93). He draws attention to the evangelist's note of time, "shortly before the feast", and when the people are made to sit upon the grass refers to the season of the year, saying:

The place where they sat was pleasant for them and the weather favourable. For it was Nisan when the earth is accustomed to be adorned with growing grass, especially in a district which becomes warmer before other places. For this was what he meant by saying above 'the passover was near.'

(Vosté, p. 94)

By such details he gives a sense of reality to the events and implies the reliability of John as a gospel writer.

Terms which he fears his readers may not understand or may wrongly interpret are explained. Of the 'testing' of Philip by Jesus (Jn vi.6) he writes:

'Testing him', he says, meaning: rendering him approved. For although he first remained in doubt and distress on account of their need, however, after he saw the miracle performed, he was then taught that everything should always be entrusted to God and that he should never be disheartened because of want.

(Vosté, p. 93)

He is not above drawing rather prosaic lessons for everyday life from minor incidents of the narrative. Of Christ's giving of thanks

(Jn vi.11) he says:

Not without a purpose did he do this, for since the common opinion held him as a man, he was bound to begin in the human way with an act of thanksgiving that he might teach those who were looking on that food is not to be eaten unless due thanks shall first ascend to its liberal giver.

(Vosté, p. 94)

He suggests with confidence the motives behind the words and deeds of the various persons in the story. Andrew is said to offer the meagre supplies on hand (Jn vi.8f) "lest he might seem to be keeping what he had for his own use" (Vosté, p. 94). The reason for gathering up the fragments in baskets (Jn vi.12) is stated to be that the news of the miracle might have a wider circulation.

Our Lord ordered them to gather up the remains that the sense of the miracle might remain longer in their memory according as they enjoyed the fragments that remained. Moreover, when he ordered this to be done, he added, 'Lest anything be lost.' He was not indeed troubled about this, lest anything should really be lost, - for what harm should follow from that? - but he thus offered by his speech a suitable pretext why he was ordering them to gather up the fragments remaining. By his foresight indeed he brought about what followed from this event, namely, that more people, by enjoying that bread over a longer time, might the more ponder over the miracle performed, or even that the event might be made known among others. For seeing all those fragments in the disciples' (baskets) and inquiring in the face of so wonderful a sight whence they were, they too might learn about the miracle that had taken place. For in these affairs it was the Lord's custom, while doing one thing, to appear to speak of another related to his providence, lest a suspicion of pride might be brought against him on account of the greatness of the signs that he did.

(Vosté, p. 94f)

The miracle is compared with those of Moses in giving manna, and of Elijah and Elisha in providing meal and oil for two needy widows (I Kings xvii.14, II Kings iv. 1-7) in order to show that they provided

no more than was needed whereas Jesus not only provided as much as was desired but exceeded even that. His power is further emphasized by the fact that the fragments were neither more nor less than could be conveniently taken care of by the labour force available, twelve men each with a basket (Vosté, p. 95f).

Jesus' refusal to be made king by the people is said by Theodore to have been "lest it be believed that he received his kingly power by the election of men" (Vosté, p. 96). Their desire to have him rule is governed solely by the wish to be continually provided with food while living in idleness (Vosté, p. 97).

The considerations that motivated speech and action are everywhere of especial interest to Theodore and his explanations are always reasonable and well thought out, although they do not always clearly arise from the Scripture itself. All circumstances surrounding the events are regarded as under the control of the Lord. He is thought to have increased the violence of the storm so that his walking on the water might appear so much the more wonderful (Vosté, p. 96). For the same reason Jesus is stated not to have entered the boat when the disciples wished to receive him but instead to have brought the boat immediately to land (Vosté, p. 96).

Theodore notes the similarity of Christ's words to the Samaritan woman about the water after which one will no longer thirst (Jn iv.13f) and his words here about the eternal nature of his provision of food (Jn vi.27; Vosté, p. 98). Theodore then writes:

Since it is the purpose of his coming that he might bestow resurrection on all men and after resurrection incorruptibility, such a purpose he is everywhere seen to expound in his words.

(Vosté, p. 98)

It is in the light of that concept that the whole discourse is interpreted by Theodore.

In commenting on Christ's exhortation to work for the food that endures to eternity, he says in explanation of the phrase, 'which the Son of man shall give you':

This food, he says, you will taste through my effort. For I will suffer for you and through my suffering I shall discharge your sins. The figure of my death, moreover, is that food which you ought to eat.

(Vosté, p. 98)

This is apparently a reference to eucharistic bread with emphasis on its meaning in relation to the work of Christ on the cross. Theodore indicates that Jesus was aware that his teaching about the mystery of the eucharist was beyond the understanding of the Jews and therefore did not hasten at once to speak of it but began in an enigmatic manner (Vosté, p. 99f). On verses 32, 33 Theodoret's comment is in part:

For these words 'Moses did not give you ..., but my Father gives you ...', seem united so far as sense is concerned and their meaning is apparently one. However, they are exceedingly far apart on both sides and each of them possesses a complete sense of its own. The former, namely, 'Moses did not give you the bread from heaven' has a complete meaning by itself; it is said indeed enigmatically. For it means: 'If that bread of old seems to you exceptional, it was not Moses who gave it to you but I.' This, however, he indicated by his silence, because for his hearers it would be difficult to understand if he said that he himself gave bread in the desert, for he was a man and was seen to be so. For when he said elsewhere, 'Before Abraham was, I am,' they would not listen but stoned him. Therefore, that he himself was the giver of manna, he rightly indicated enigmatically by his silence. However, he added to this: 'But my Father gives you the true bread from heaven,' meaning: 'You received it even from me. But if you will obey me, relinquish the gift of bread and manna; for each is altogether worthless and weak. Desire rather the true bread which the Father gives you from above which descends from heaven and gives

eternal life to the whole world.' About his body he is evidently speaking here. For insofar as it is figuratively eaten, that is what he called what was going to be eaten in the institution of the mystery (of the eucharist). For the bread which was given by our Lord to the disciples is a figure of the food of his body, which even in this day we place upon the altar and take in our hands as the Lord's body. Clearly he indicates this in the following words saying: 'And the bread which I will give is my flesh.'

(Vosté, p. 100f)

In this long passage Theodore's expansion of Jesus' words makes them express much more than John actually says. He chooses verses from other places and asserts that what they say is implied here, and implied, strangely enough, by the very silence of Jesus concerning them. From John viii.58 he takes the idea of Christ's activity in the long-past history of Israel. He is thinking, of course, of the Word rather than of the human Jesus. He anticipates the later verses of this chapter in saying that the true bread from heaven refers to the body of Christ. Nothing extraneous is added to John's picture of Jesus but the passage itself is stretched beyond its actual content. Theodore's reference to the eucharist is not surprising considering the long tradition of its connection with this chapter. What is more remarkable is the way in which, in an age which was everywhere speaking more and more realistically of the sacrament, he appears to stress the figurative aspect of the bread. The same practice is to be noted in his comment on verse 51:

Here he evidently shows that he called his body bread, calling it, moreover, figuratively by this name either because it is eaten or for a type of the mystery to be handed down.

(Vosté, p. 106)

And in speaking of the gift of eternal life, he says

For see! in the eucharistic mystery which among us is accomplished in the type of the Lord's body, through the descent of the Holy Spirit, we believe that this very benefit takes place.

(Vosté, p. 109)

In Theodore's homilies on the eucharist we find a number of passages which describe the sacrament in this same manner.

Because we are born now symbolically through baptism in the hope of that other birth which we are expecting, we receive at present in the form of an earnest, the first fruits of the grace of the Holy Spirit which will then be given to us, as we expect to receive it fully in the next world through the resurrection. It is only after its reception that we hope to become immortal and immutable, and it behooves us now to eat symbolically by the grace of the Holy Spirit, a food suitable to the present life.

(Lib. ad Bapt. WS VI, p. 72)

We are ordered to perform in this world the symbols and signs of the future things so that, through the service of the sacrament, we may be like men who enjoy symbolically the happiness of the heavenly benefits, and thus acquire a sense of possession and a strong hope of the things for which we look.

(Ibid., p. 82)

As the real new birth is the one which we expect through the resurrection, and we nevertheless perform this new birth symbolically and sacramentally through baptism, so also the real food of immortality is that which we hope to receive truly in heaven by the grace of the Holy Spirit, but now we symbolically eat the immortal food which is given to us by the grace of the Holy Spirit, whether in symbols or through symbols.

(Ibid., p. 82)

The earthly worship rendered by priests and deacons is described as an image of the heavenly worship performed by Christ as great high priest based on the concept as developed in the Letter to the Hebrews. Such phrases as "the vision and the shadow of the happenings that took place," (Ibid., p. 85), "a remembrance of that ineffable gift which he bestowed upon us through his passion" (Ibid., p. 89) are used. Of the communicants he says: "They think in their minds, while eating the holy bread, that they also are receiving an ineffable communion with him" (Ibid., p. 107), having just spoken of Christ's post-resurrection appearances to his disciples.

By an application of certain verses of John vi to the sacrament Theodore shows in his discourse to the newly baptized that he has a strong belief in the operation of the Holy Spirit to bring about Christ's presence in the bread and wine, but the terms in which it is couched contain none of the realistic imagery found in Chrysostom's homilies on the subject, and he continually directs the thoughts of his auditors backward to the work of salvation effected on the cross (Ibid., p. 105) and forward to the future communion with the Lord when signs and symbols will not be needed (Ibid., p. 112). The role of the flesh is almost wholly subordinated to that of the spirit. He says that even the Lord's body did not possess or bestow immortality in its own right but only insofar as the Holy Spirit made this possible. He then continues:

This is the reason why when our Lord said: "Whoso eateth my body and drinketh my blood hath eternal life", and saw that the Jews were murmuring and doubting the things that were said, and thinking that it was impossible to receive immortality from mortal flesh, he added immediately for the purpose of removing this doubt: "If you see the Son of man ascend up where he was before." It is as if he were saying: the thing that is being said about my body does not appear now true to you, but when you see me rising up from the dead and ascending into heaven it will be made manifest (to you) that you were not to think that what had been said was harsh and unseemly, as the facts themselves will convince you that I have moved to an immortal nature, because if I were not in such a nature I would not have ascended into heaven. And in order to show from where these things came to him he added quickly: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing," as if he were saying: these things will come to it from the nature of the vivifying Spirit, and it is through him that it will be given to it to become immortal and to confer also immortality on others.

(Ibid., p. 75f)

And on the same verse:

By no means does flesh of its own nature indeed confer this benefit but divine nature which is not immersed in material things bestows that life through the body.

(Vosté, p. 108f)

He goes on in his discourse to the newly baptized to mention the transformation effected by the Spirit on the elements, adducing the change brought about in Christ's body at his resurrection, which he has just attributed to the Spirit, as reason for believing in a change in the bread and wine, and quoting John vi.51. Indeed, he can later speak of the communicant as kissing the sacramental bread and offering prayer to it as if to Christ our Lord (Lib. ad Bapt. WS VI, p. 114) but such expressions as "fix their teeth in his flesh" or "touch his flesh with your tongue"⁴¹ used by Chrysostom have no place in his description.

The idea of a symbol is further drawn out in the following passage:

Because we sustain ourselves in this life with bread and food he called himself the bread of life that came down from heaven, as if he were saying: I am truly the bread of life and give immortality to those who believe in me through this visible (body) for the sake of which I came down and to which I granted immortality, which through it will extend to those who believe in me. While he might have said: "It is I who give life," he did not say it, but said "I am the bread of life", because as we would be receiving the promise given us here of the immortality, which we expect in sacramental symbols, through bread and cup, we had to honour also the symbol which became worthy of this appellation. He called himself bread as an allusion to the things that were to be given, as he wished to convince us from the things belonging to this world that we shall receive also without doubt the benefits that are high above words. The fact that in order to sustain ourselves in this life we eat bread, and the fact that bread cannot fulfil this function by its nature, but has been enabled to do so by order of God who imparted this power to it, should

41. Vide supra p. 161.

by necessity convince us not to doubt that we shall receive immortality by eating the sacramental bread.

(Ibid., p. 76f)

Although the communicant is to believe that the sacrament confers eternal life Theodore seems aware that it is only in anticipation that this takes place. The elements are honoured, not as though they were themselves flesh and blood, but only as symbols of Christ's body.

As we have seen, the phrase 'Him has God the Father sealed' (Jn vi.27) had called forth the explanations of many commentators. Not for Theodore, however, does it suggest the imprinting of the divine nature on Christ's humanity, as it had for Hilary of Poitiers and for Gregory of Nyssa; Theodore's interpretation lacks any such pictorial imagery.

The word 'signavit' he always said for 'confirmavit'; by no means however, as some thought, was it spoken about the likeness of his divine generation. In the same way John also said 'Whoever receives his testimony, sets his seal to this, that God is true,' that is, as much as he can, he confirms and seals the truth of God ... 'Signavit' is said on our part, indeed, insofar as we show by our faith, as we are able, with respect to the truth of God, that his words are true, but on God's part, when by his work he truly brings it about that the 'man assumed' bestows eternal life on others also.

(Vosté, p. 99)

'The man assumed' and 'the Word who assumes' are terms Theodore often uses for the manhood of Christ and the indwelling Word. He seems to have regarded Christ's saving work as a kind of free co-operation between God's grace in the Word and the free moral choice of the man Jesus. In his De Incarnatione he speaks thus of the co-operation:

And he had an inclination which was not by chance towards the good because of his union with God the Word. He was also accounted worthy of this (union) by the foreknowledge of God the Word, who united himself with him from above. Thus, because of all this, he kept straightway with discretion a great

hatred of evil, and with boundless love he fixed himself upon good. And receiving a power in accord with the fitting purpose (of the divine economy), and receiving the co-operating energy of God the Word, he kept steadfast for the rest (of his ministry) from changing for the worse. On the one hand, this was a purpose he held himself; and on the other hand, it was something he kept faithfully according to the purpose and by the co-operating energy of God the Word.

(De Inc.; PG LXVI.977)⁴²

In writing of the divine and human attributes of Jesus, Theodore tried always to distinguish between those properly applicable only to the Word and those referable only to the man Jesus. Greer has shown⁴³ that although Theodore rejected the Alexandrian understanding of the 'communicatio idiomatum' and often spoke as if Jesus and the Word were two distinct beings, as in the passage just quoted, the fact that John does not hesitate to apply the divine attributes to Jesus forced him to modify his position sufficiently to speak of the 'man assumed' as omnipotent (Vosté, pp. 163, 84). It is Greer's contention that the faithfulness of Theodore to the words of the Scripture in his Johannine exegesis caused this modification of the theological concepts he brought to the work of interpretation.⁴⁴ In the following passage, which comes immediately after the quotation on page 228f above, he is grappling with this problem and has asserted, "About his body he is evidently speaking here."

If therefore he says about his body, 'Which descends from heaven and gives life to the world', let us not marvel. For from heaven is the Son of man who was assumed, at the last day on account of the resurrec-

42. ET R.A. Greer, op.cit., p. 51f.

43. R.A. Greer, ibid., pp. 146f.

44. Ibid., p. 147f.

tion and life of all, just as the Apostle said: The first man is of the earth, earthy, the second man is the Lord from heaven (I Cor. xv.47). Not indeed as Adam's body was from the earth, did our Lord come down from heaven, for he was formed in Mary's womb as has been shown. But (so the Apostle wrote) looking forward to his advent from heaven for the future general resurrection. If indeed now a second time he says of his body that it came down itself from heaven, it was the Lord's custom, that those things which pertained to his divinity he would also say about his human nature, not that his own nature possessed that origin, in accordance with what we declared above. If therefore about his future descent this was said when he will give life to the world and raise up all men everywhere, and if about his present advent it is on that account said that the divinity existing in him while he was in heaven was always in him, and is even now in him, he by no means said it unreasonably.

(Vosté, p. 101f)

The 'man assumed' asserts that he has come from heaven, whereas his origin was really upon earth in the womb. Only the 'Word who assumes' actually descended. After his resurrection, however, the 'man assumed' now endowed with immortality and the divine powers of the Word who has assumed him, ascends to heaven to await the time when he will come again to raise all men. Only then will he really descend from heaven and it is in anticipation of that future advent that he now speaks as though the powers he will then possess are already his.

Wiles has said of this interpretation that Theodore "appears conscious that this does not really fit the context at all."⁴⁵ There is certainly no suggestion of the two natures in the Johannine text. But since Theodore has already attributed the words to Christ's body, with reference to the eucharist, though at a time when Jesus was still in the midst of his

45. M.F. Wiles, The Spiritual Gospel, p. 135.

ministry, he is left with the dilemma of reconciling them with his own christological doctrine which demanded that the divine and human should not be confused. He indicates what is appropriate to the two natures but the only explanation he can give for John's (for him, Jesus') manner of speaking is that it was the Lord's custom and not unreasonable. In Christ's dialogue with Nicodemus the same problem is present for Theodore (Jn iii.13). Divine attributes are again predicated of the human Jesus. In that instance Theodore's explanation is:

because the meaning of what he said overcame the mind of Nicodemus, by joining them with the divine things he confirmed what he intended to say.

(Vosté, p. 50)

The rather puzzling idea that reference to divine things constitutes confirmation of what has been said is found in a similar context in comment on John vi.51:

He said this bread came down from heaven as we explained above. He did not, then, mean that the body descended thence; but (as he said) that his nature was the sublime gift of that bread (rei). By alluding to the greatness of divinity he confirmed his word.

(Vosté, p. 106)

Perhaps he means that it is Jesus' way of saying, "I am divine and therefore may be trusted to speak the truth."

Theodore appears acutely aware of the problem posed by John's mode of writing about Jesus. He tries valiantly to read the Antiochene christology into the text but with rather imperfect results. It cannot be said, however, that he has twisted the text to something altogether different from what John wrote. The modification of his doctrine of which Greer writes is not seen in the present chapter, except perhaps

that when John writes that Jesus knew within himself that his disciples were murmuring (vs 61) Theodore says that he knew their thoughts "by divine virtue" (Voste, p. 108) and this time does not spell out the distinction between the two natures, even though the superhuman knowledge may appear to be predicated of the human Jesus. Perhaps he merely feels that he has said sufficient on that score for the moment so that his readers will now be able to sort it out for themselves. Or is it that for the moment he too has slipped into the Johannine way of thinking?

When he comments upon Jesus' reply to the murmurings (vs 62) Theodore again speaks of the relationship between the two natures as if they were distinct individuals.

When he wishes to speak of the great things which resulted in relation to his human nature, he proves that they were by no means done through his own nature, but by virtue of his divine nature. For this does not agree with human nature: 'He ascended where he was before.' For he did not descend from heaven and again ascend thither. But that he may say as by a figure: 'he will ascend into heaven,' to the place of him who is within him, who, to be sure, according to the greatness of his nature gave him of himself and raised him on high. Therefore that nature through which he could ascend conferred upon him the power of giving eternal life.

(Vosté, p. 108)

Theodore thought of the 'man assumed' as having a will of his own which worked in co-operation with the 'Word who assumes'. In the interpretation of verse 38 Jesus' own free will is maintained.

How then was he not able to do his own will also? For if he and the Father will the same thing, he was not only doing his will but his own also. But that saying means: Come, not indeed that I may establish an assemblage for myself alone, in opposition

to the Father, but that all, through faith in me, I may lead to him. For by no means can anyone believe in me and be a stranger to the Father.

(Vosté, p. 103)

Theodore gives an interpretation of Jesus' references to life and death which distinguishes between the natural and the spiritual. With reference to the comparison between the fathers who ate manna and died and those who will eat the true bread and shall not die (vs 49, 50) he writes:

It is observed: 'he shall not die'; he did not say, 'he shall not taste death'; rather: it is not, then, indeed death when anyone dies believing that death is cancelled. So also blessed Paul said: 'About those who sleep, brethren, I wish you to know that you may not grieve as those who have no hope' (I Thess. iv.13), here calling those who have hope in the resurrection 'sleeping'. In another place, moreover, he says, 'Why are they baptized for the dead?' (I Cor. xv.29), calling bodies which have no hope of resurrection 'the dead', as if those who have hope of resurrection are not mortal. So also our Lord, when he said: 'He is not the God of the dead, but of the living' (Mk xii.27), did not wish to call dead those who are expecting the resurrection.

(Vosté, p. 105)

Theodore's exegesis of Christ's words about 'life' (vs 53) is the logical counterpart of this.

He does not say, 'You shall not live', but 'there is no life in you'; that is, you will not be immortal. Indeed, it is possible to live, because from another source is the cause of this life. Moreover, no one can be immortal unless he receives this life within himself.

(Vosté, p. 106)

Wiles assesses Theodore's exegesis of John's Gospel thus: "For all the honesty of his approach, the directness and practical good sense of many of his comments, his commentary as a whole is a disappointing

book."⁴⁶ He believes Theodore has not grasped the sweep and depth of John's theological insight and has tried to confine it too much within Antiochene modes of thought. Greer sees his work as a struggle between his theological presuppositions and his exegetical honesty in which the latter, however slightly, gains the ascendancy.⁴⁷

Both judgments contain a considerable measure of truth. It may be questioned, however, whether any commentator, ancient or modern, has really been equal to the exposition of John's deepest meanings or wholly resisted the temptation to impose his own patterns of thought upon the author's narrative. Whatever his faults, Theodore's consistent resistance to fanciful interpretations and his attempt to understand John's delineation of Jesus as the picture of an actual life lived among men, albeit shot through at so many points by the divine, are a refreshing breeze blowing through the allegories and dogmatic arguments which cumber so much of his contemporaries' reflection upon the Fourth Gospel.

Cyril of Alexandria

In his exegesis Cyril distinguishes between the literal and spiritual senses of Scripture. He does not appear in any of his writings to have set forth explicitly the principle upon which he made the distinction,⁴⁸ as, for example, in the De Doctrina Christiana

46. Ibid., p. 159.

47. R.A. Greer, op. cit., p. 150.

48. A. Kerrigan, "The Objects of the Literal and Spiritual Senses of the New Testament according to St. Cyril of Alexandria" TU 63, 1957, 354.

Augustine had defined his criterion for literal and allegorical interpretations. By examining Cyril's commentaries in search of such a principle, Kerrigan has been led to the conclusion that the distinction between the two senses is to be found "in the nature of the objects described by them."⁴⁹

Objects of the literal sense are those which may be perceived through the senses and are associated with those things which are characteristic of man and his activities.⁵⁰ Jesus, in the manner of men, shows the outward signs of anger (In Joh. Ev. ix, P.2, p. 363). In referring to the season of the year and the sprouting of plants (Jn iv.35), he is using "the grosser things of sense" in his discourse (In Joh. Ev. ii.5, P.1, p. 295). When he speaks of the things he has told the disciples while yet with them (Jn xiv.25), he is speaking as a man and his speech has in it τὸ ἀνθρώπινον (In Joh. Ev. x, P. 2, p. 506).

Kerrigan asserts that Cyril seldom troubles to point out such instances of the literal sense which have no further higher significance, but more often draws attention to those which possess a literal sense, but one which points also to a higher meaning.⁵¹ Of this latter kind was Christ's use of the wind as a type of the Spirit in teaching Nicodemus, who "by the reasoning brought forward as it were in an image" was led to conceive "what was above the senses" (In Joh. Ev. ii.1, P. 1, p. 220). Christ speaks of his Father as teaching him (Jn viii.28),

49. Ibid., p. 354.

50. Ibid., p. 356.

51. Ibid., p. 360.

expressing himself "in more human fashion", in order to signify that, just as it is likeness of nature that enables a child to speak with a human voice like his father, so it is likeness of nature with the Father that enables Christ himself to speak things worthy of God (In Joh. Ev. v.5, P. 2, p. 45).⁵²

Frequently, however, in speaking of himself, Christ does not restrict his words to those appropriate to one nature only, divine or human, but

mingles the human with the divine, and neither reverts to the pure glory of the Godhead, nor yet altogether confines his range within the limits of humanity, but traverses both marvellously and at the same time in mixed fashion too, since he is at once both God and man.

(P. 2, p. 466)

The objects of the spiritual sense are divine teachings, and especially what relates to the divine aspects of Christ's life and nature, to the work of the Holy Spirit and to the Church as a divine institution.⁵³

As a kind of summary of his account of Christ's walking on the water (Jn vi.15-21) Cyril says "Come and ... let us work out the spiritual interpretation." Jesus' going up into the mountain signifies his ascension, the disciples in their boat are a type of ecclesiastical teachers in the midst of temptations and heretical dangers, who will experience deliverance when Christ returns in glory and be brought to their destination, that is, the kingdom of heaven.

52. The examples are chosen from those given by Kerrigan, ibid., pp. 358-362.

53. Ibid., p. 365.

Their fear on seeing Jesus signifies that even the righteous will tremble before the Judge at his coming (In Joh. Ev. iii.4, P. 1, p. 430). Our examination of Cyril's commentary on John vi will provide further examples of the way in which he introduces the objects of the spiritual sense.

Anti-Jewish Polemic

A feature of Cyril's writings that has been noted by Wilken is a strong anti-Jewish polemic.⁵⁴ Early in his episcopate there had been outbreaks of violence between the two religious communities in Alexandria which resulted in the expulsion of the Jews from the city.⁵⁵

The Church, which considered itself to be the new Israel and the rightful heir of the Jewish Scriptures, had long been engaged in controversy with Judaism over the very different manner in which the two communities interpreted those Scriptures which they held in common. At times the heat engendered by that conflict and aggravated by the continuing presence in their midst of the old Israel, resulted in polemic outbursts by the Christians such as Chrysostom had displayed in his Homilies Against the Jews.⁵⁶

Cyril's commentaries on the Old Testament contain much criticism of Jewish exegesis and practice and those on the New are by no means without it. This anti-Jewish attitude is to be discerned in his

54. R.L. Wilken, Judaism and the Early Christian Mind (New Haven, 1971), p. 59.

55. Ibid., p. 57; J. Mahé, "Cyrille (Saint) patriarche d'Alexandrie" DTC 3, 1908, col. 2477.

56. R.L. Wilken, op. cit., p. 1.

comments on the passage we are studying, although it does not form a major element in them. In his Commentary on John Cyril takes occasion from the very first verse of chapter vi to develop at length the thesis that the departures of Christ from Jerusalem signify the transference of grace from the Jews to the Gentiles (P. 1, p. 397). Jesus' treatment by the Jews is contrasted with his reception by the Galileans.

For he is often driven out by the mad folly of the Jews, and lodging with the aliens, seems both to be kept safe by them and to enjoy due honour, whereby he gives judgment of superiority to the Church of the Gentiles, and through the piety of others convicts the men of Israel of their hatred of God and shows the cruelty in them by means of the gentleness of these (aliens) that in every respect they may be proved to have been well and rightly thrust out of the promise to the fathers.

(P. 1, p. 401)

In departing he crosses the sea of Tiberias, in so doing

all but threatening those who blasphemously take up the idea that they ought to persecute him, that he would go so far away from them and estrange himself from their whole nation, as even to make the way of their conversion to him in some manner impassable, for the sea can by no means be trodden by foot of man.

(P. 1, p. 401)

The strength of this invective appears to reflect animosity towards a present situation rather than the calm description of the historical reaction between Jesus and the Jews in the Lord's lifetime. The multitude which was fed, and represents for Cyril the aliens outside Judea, is contrasted with the Jews who "are impiously angry" at the healing of the sick (P. 1, p. 405). After the miracle of the feeding this contrast is again seen in the crowd's wish to honour Jesus as king, unlike the blasphemous Jews who are said to have lost the power of right judgment and to be hard of heart and inhuman (P. 1,

p. 421). They are described as violent and vainglorious (P. 1, p. 415).

Cyril is guilty of a strange inconsistency for after praising the multitude for their faith and desire to honour Christ (P. 1, p. 422) he treats them later, when they follow Jesus to Capernaum (vs 24f), as those who delight only in the pleasures of the flesh (P. 1, p. 433), as senseless and childish (P. 1, p. 434) and finally begins to describe them as Jews (P. 1, pp. 441 and 454) and apply to them various derogatory expressions. Such a reversal of judgment on the crowd so that from standing for the Church of the Gentiles it comes to bear the opprobrious term 'Jewish' indicates that Cyril's abusive attitude to the Jews overcame his consistency of exegesis.

Cyril considers their wish to make Jesus King (vs 15) had shown that the Jews had fully understood that he was divine and leaves them without excuse when they refuse later to recognize his divine nature (P. 1, p. 477f).

At verse 53 the Jews inquire how it is possible for Jesus to give them his flesh to eat. Cyril remarks: "They ceaselessly repeat 'how' to God as though they knew not that it is a word filled with all blasphemy" (P. 1, p. 526). Cyril warns his readers against similar curiosity regarding the 'how' of things divine, "for it is a Jewish word and therefore deserving of extremest punishment" (P. 1, p. 526). The suggestion may be that some Christians questioned the Church's teaching about the eucharist and that such doubters are to be held no better than Jews.

Christ's teaching openly in the synagogue is the occasion for remarking that they could not plead ignorance in the hope of a lighter

sentence but "since they, although knowing and often instructed in divine things, still outraged him with their unbelief, how will they not reasonably be punished, all mercy at last taken away, and pay a most bitter penalty to him that was dishonoured by them?" (P. 1, p. 547).

Of the Jews' reaction to the Lord's teaching Cyril says again:

The carnal Jew, ignorantly esteeming the spiritual mystery to be foolishness, when admonished by the words of the Saviour to mount up to the understanding worthy of man, ever sinks down to the folly which is his foster-brother, calling evil good and good evil according to the prophet's voice.

(P. 1, p. 548)

It might almost be supposed that Cyril is recalling an occasion when he himself had engaged in controversy with Jews over the Christian teaching about the eucharist for he has just been explaining the references to Christ's flesh in that way and continues with similar teaching.

The "wretched" Jews are said to have minds of rock into which the seed cannot penetrate (P. 1, p. 575). It is Wilken's opinion that "His opposition to the Arians or the Antiochenes seems like a friendly intramural contest in contrast to the invective against the Jews."⁵⁷ It may be observed that, whereas Cyril addresses heretics as though he wished to convert them either by argument or ridicule to his way of thinking, he merely heaps abuse upon the Jews for their ignorance and perverseness as those whom he has no wish to see won to the true faith.

57. Ibid., p. 60

Jesus as Wonder-Worker

Since Cyril continually stresses the divinity of Christ rather than his humanity, he emphasizes the wonder and power displayed in his miracles. A favourite way of referring to Christ is as the Wonder-Worker. In the course of dealing with the two miracles of this chapter, there are nine instances of the use of this conception in describing him: παραδόξων ἐργάτης, P. 1, p. 404, l. 22; μεγαλουργός, p. 404, l. 21, p. 425, l. 11; θαυματουργός, p. 405, l. 13, p. 426, l. 9, p. 435, l. 21; παραδόξων δημιουργός, p. 421, l. 19f; πολλῶν θαυμάτων δημιουργός, p. 429, l. 28f; παραδόξοποιός, p. 433, l. 17. The purpose of the miracles is to reveal to men Christ's divine nature that they may come to believe in him and acknowledge him to be God (P. 1, p. 425), and to provide assurance to the disciples (P. 1, p. 429).

Philip is regarded as a disciple of duller understanding and slower apprehension than the rest because after having been a long time in the company of Jesus he asks for still further revelation (Jn xiv.8.9). It is because his faith needs to be exercised that Jesus directs his question to him on the occasion of the miracle of the feeding. It is thus that Cyril interprets the phrase 'to prove him' (Jn vi.6; P. 1, p. 403). Andrew is similarly said to be weak in faith because he was not expecting a miracle as previous experience should have taught him to do (P. 1, p. 410). Jesus is said to have introduced the subsequent miracle of walking on the water because these two disciples had doubted his power, that he might free their minds from any inadequate conception of him, for their destiny is to be teachers of the earth (P. 1, p. 426f).

The miracles are seen as ordered and arranged in accordance with God's plan and purpose (*οἰκονομία*). Details which at first suggest pettiness on the part of Christ, e.g., the command to gather up the crumbs ("for what would be supposed to be the remnant of five barley loaves") are found to exhibit a great economy, in this case, increasing the marvel, that so much should remain over, and proving for those who took part, that the whole experience had not been a mere vision (P. 1, p. 418f). Jesus' action in withdrawing alone to the mountain and sending his disciples away is directly planned to bring about the opportunity for the second miracle (P. 1, p. 426). The storm is contrived to increase their fear, the sense of their need of Jesus, and the relief brought by his appearance (P. 1, p. 427f). The reader is exhorted to admire the economy of Christ in devising for the multitude a twofold medicine, combining both reproof and miracle in his reply to their inquiry (vs 26), the miracle appearing in his ability to read their thoughts (P. 1, p. 435).

Allegorical Exegesis of Miracles

Just as Cyril had seen special significance in Jesus' movement from one place to another, i.e., his departure from Jerusalem, he draws symbolic teaching from his ascending the mountain (Jn vi.3). Quoting John xii.32, he thinks it points both to the crucifixion and to the ascension. From the mountain top Jesus is portrayed as seeing, with the foreknowledge appropriate to God, those who will come to him in faith (P. 1, p. 407) and providentially watching over the saints (P. 1, p. 424). Christ's care for the needs of the multitude is seen as a

lesson in hospitality and charity and Cyril writes at length on these virtues (P. 1, p. 406 and 419f).

The smallest details of the narrative are often forced to render up an edifying lesson through the exercise of a rather forced ingenuity. When the evangelist notes that there was much grass there (vs 10) Cyril remarks that their reclining on the grass symbolizes the joy and delight that come with the gifts of the Spirit to the mind that is fed by Christ and quotes from Psalm xxiii.1.2a. Although there were women and children present, the writer numbers the men only to teach, says Cyril,

as in a riddle, that to those who quit them as men, that is, in good conduct, will the food be supplied more fittingly and specially by the Saviour, and not to those who are effeminate in no good habit of life, nor yet to those who are infantile in understanding, so as to be thereby unable to understand any of the things that it is necessary to know.

(P. 1, p. 415)⁵⁸

There is mystery in the kind of food provided and in the numerical details. The interpretation is similar to that of other early commentators with some variation in the detail. The barley loaves are the coarser food of the Law, the fish the more delicate food of apostolic and evangelic preaching, the spiritual writings of the fishermen, since it is possible, Cyril thinks, from the occupation of some to include all twelve disciples under that term (P. 1, p. 417f). Thus the writings of the saints old and new are set by the apostles before those who love Christ (P. 1, p. 425). Cyril interprets the scene as representing the

58. Of the numbering of the multitude Origen had remarked that perhaps only those who were worthy were numbered, the rest being accounted merely as women and children. He then suggests the text may be allegorized with the aid of the following: I Cor. iii.1, II Cor. xi.2, I Cor. xiii.11 (Com. in Matt. xi.3, GCS 10, p. 37f).

Church with its bishops as the successors of the apostles.

What then shall we understand from this, except indeed that Christ is the president (πανεπιστάτης) of them that believe in him, and feeds them that come to him with divine and heavenly food, doctrines plainly of the Law and Prophets, evangelic and apostolic? But he does not altogether himself appear as the doer of these things but the disciples minister to us the grace from above (for it is not they that speak, as it is written, but the Spirit of the Father who speaks in them), yet their labour therein shall not be without reward to the holy apostles. For, having dispensed to us the spiritual food and ministered the good things of our Saviour, they will receive richest recompense and obtain the fullest grace of bounty from God. For this and nothing else, I think, is the meaning of the gathering together of a basketful by each at the command of Christ, after their toil and the service expended upon the feasters. But there is no doubt that after them the things typically signified will pass also to the rulers of the holy churches.

(P. 1, p. 420f)

The miracle that follows is also seen as a picture of the church, the disciples being its teachers toiling through the dangers and temptations of the sea of this present life but freed from fear and labour by the parousia of Christ and brought to their destined haven in the heavenly kingdom (P. 1, p. 430f). The fear of the disciples at sight of Jesus (vs 19) signifies that even those who are found faithfully watching will tremble at the coming of the Judge (P. 1, p. 432).

At the end of his comments on the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand Cyril introduces a summary, recapitulating the spiritual meanings he has read into it (P. 1, pp. 424ff). Similar summaries appear after his comments on the walking on the sea (P. 1, pp. 430ff) and again after verse 26 (P. 1, pp. 436ff). In the latter he links

his earlier interpretations to the crowd's pursuit of Jesus which he sees as the vain appeal of the unrighteous at the last judgment. Their calling on him as 'Rabbi' he likens to the cry 'Lord, Lord' of Matthew vii.22. Their rebuke is a type of the rebuke to be received at the last day from the Judge, "no longer mild and gentle, but reproving and avenging ... no unseasonably clement Judge, nor yet yielding to entreaties for mercy" (P. 1, p. 437).

Old Testament Typology

Whenever the Scripture offers a comparison between the manna of old and the true bread (vs 35, 49, 50, 55, 58) Cyril contrasts the temporary benefit of manna as food for the body with the eternal benefit of the bread of life which confers immortality (P. 1, pp. 472, 475, 515, 534).

At the first mention of the manna provided in the wilderness by Moses, Cyril introduces a long digression using the story of the deliverance from Egypt and the sojourn in the desert as a type of the life of a convert from worldly passions to a more temperate life though still under the temptations of worldly pleasures. As manna was supplied in the wilderness so the true Manna supplies strength for the believer's resistance to such temptation. The details of the giving of quails and manna daily with a double portion before the Sabbath are given an elaborate typical significance with respect to Law and Gospel (P. 1, pp. 456 - 469). But the typical manna having been superseded, the true bread from heaven nourishes us to eternal life

both through the supply of the Holy Spirit and the participation of his own flesh which infuses into us the participation of God and effaces the deadness which comes from the ancient curse.

(P. 1, p. 473)

The gift of Moses is set in contrast with that of Christ and the conclusion drawn that the giver of more excellent gifts must be himself more excellent (P. 1, p. 474).

Peter's confession (vs 68) is rather incongruously made the opening for another long digression to show

That a type of Christ was the holy tabernacle which led the people in the wilderness and that the ark that was in it and the lamp and the altar, both that of incense and that of sacrifice, signified Christ himself.

(P. 1, p. 562)

The rather tenuous connecting link is the idea of following Christ as teacher and guide as the Israelites followed the pillar of cloud and so did not go astray. Cyril has had the story of the exodus and the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites in his mind throughout the exposition of John vi and has frequently used it as a mine for typical interpretations. Many of them do not really assist the exegesis of the chapter, which, except for the references to manna, has no direct links with the Mosaic narrative.

Lack of faith in Christ's power to work miracles calls to mind the Israelites' doubt of God's power to provide for them in the desert and their desire to return to Egypt (P. 1, p. 411). Moses also lacked faith when commanded to bring water from the rock (P. 1, p. 412). All the regulations concerning the provision of manna and quails have typical significance. Even the pot of manna kept in the tabernacle,

which did not decay, represents the righteous soul filled with Christ and thus immortal (P. 1, p. 468). Joshua is a type of Christ (P. 1, p. 473). Christ was represented in the cake offered as first fruits of the threshing floor (P. 1, p. 522), John the Baptist in the lamp in the tabernacle, the twelve apostles in the twelve loaves of Bread of the Presence (P. 1, pp. 522, 523). Christ's life-giving body and blood were prefigured in the first paschal lamb whose blood guarded the Israelites from death (P. 1, p. 532). The disciples who turn away are likened to the Israelites who tired of the manna and longed for the food they had known in Egypt (P. 1, p. 548) and again to those who believed the spies who brought back an ill report of the promised land and so were forbidden to enter it (P. 1, p. 558). Christ was with the ancient people of God under the form of tabernacle and cloud and fire (P. 1, p. 564) and the ark of the covenant (P. 1, p. 568). He is represented both by the candlestick and by the Bread of the Presence (P. 1, pp. 571, 572). Even the position of the altars in the tabernacle has significance as pointing out various truths relating to the sacrifice of Christ (P. 1, p. 573). This last group of types having reference to the tabernacle is worked out with much fanciful detail. Besides these major references to the Mosaic narrative there are many lesser ones of an incidental nature.

Anti-Arian Exegesis

Cyril's stated purpose in composing a commentary on the Fourth Gospel was to refute heresy, for he says:

Turning about on every hand our discourse to the more dogmatical exposition, we will set it according to our ability in opposition to the false doctrines of those that teach heresy.

(P. 1, p. 7)

At the beginning of each of the sections or chapters into which the commentary is divided there is a thesis of dogmatic nature which forms one of the main themes of the following exposition of Scripture, but along with this theme other doctrines are touched on, lessons drawn and spiritual interpretations explained. Durand notes the anti-Arian character of the commentary as well as its unfavourable attitude to any dualist tendency in christology.⁵⁹ However, he thinks Cyril's concern in christology is primarily soteriological. It is in order to explain how Christ can save men that he seeks to define the relationship between Christ's two natures.⁶⁰ Wiles has shown that this close connection between christology and soteriology holds true for the fathers of the early Church as a whole.⁶¹ Chadwick writes that the commentary contains Cyril's fundamental position on Christology.⁶²

The last phrase of verse 27 allows Cyril to state his doctrine of Christ's two natures in opposition to heretical exegesis.

'Sealed' again is either put for 'anointed' (for he who is anointed is sealed) or as showing that he has been by nature formed unto the Father ... 'For although I seem as one of you, that is, man with flesh, yet was I anointed and sealed by God the Father unto an exact likeness with him. For you shall see,' he says, 'that he is in me and I again in him naturally, even though for your sakes I was born man of a woman according to the ineffable order of the economy. For I can do all things with authority appropriate to God and do not

59. G.M. de Durand, ed., Deux Dialogues Christologiques SC 97 (Paris, 1964), p. 17.

60. Ibid., p. 18.

61. M.F. Wiles, "Soteriological Arguments in the Fathers" TU 94, 1966, 321f.

62. H. Chadwick, "Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy" JTS New series 2, 1951, 151f.

in any way come short of the power inherent in my Father' ... For we must observe again that when he says that the Son of man will give the things worthy of God and that he has been sealed unto the image of God the Father, he does not endure the division of him that separates the temple of the Virgin from the true Sonship, but defines himself and wills to be conceived of again as One.

(P. 1, p. 441f)

'Formed' (*μεμóρφωται*) may refer to the manner in which wax would take on the form of the seal impressed on it, but since it is 'by nature', it probably has more the significance of 'begotten with the same nature as the Father.' 'Begotten', of course, does not suit the metaphor of a seal.

The heretic's interpretation is also given. The seal, impressed on wax and then removed, leaves no part of itself, leaving only a mere image and accurate likeness. Therefore, the Son is proved to be not of the essence of the Father but only a copy of it (P. 1, p. 442f). Cyril seeks to prove that even this interpretation does not prove what his opponent wishes it to prove. No seal will seal without an impress (*χαρακτήρ*) but according to Scripture the Son is the Impress of the Person of God (Heb. 1.3). He is in the Father naturally just as the brightness is in the brightening and of the brightening, both different from it and yet not different according to the way in which it is conceived. There is no essential division between them. In respect of identity of essence they are the same yet each tends towards something of its own. The Word is sealed by the Father, or rather is the means by which he remoulds man, as with a seal, to a likeness of his Son, for Psalm iv.7 (iv.6 LXX) says 'The light of thy Countenance was marked upon us, O Lord'. He explains that 'countenance' (*πρόσωπον*) refers to the Son just as did 'Impress' (P.1, p. 443f). At this point the Son appears

as the seal itself rather than that which is sealed.

The opposing view is restated, the metaphor of the impression of a seal showing that the Son has only an accurate likeness, as image to archetype. Cyril replies that this gives the Son no security of likeness, he may lose the likeness, in which case his opponent should deny that he is begotten of God and cease to worship him, for he would be only a creature. If divine attributes may be found in one who is not divine by nature, we may all be gods and there is no difference between human and divine. Cyril again asserts that the Son is of the essence of the Father and ends his argument with an illustration from the Law. Each Israelite was to give to the Lord half a δίδραχμον as a ransom for himself (Ex. xxx.12.13 LXX). As Christ is a ransom to the Father for all, he is understood as the δραχμή. But the one coin (δίδραχμον) contains two identical δραχμαί. Thus Father and Son should be conceived to be identical, having separate existence, yet equal in every respect and of the same essence (P. 1, pp. 444 - 451). Cyril has made a brave effort to explain the unexplainable, but the Arian might be forgiven if he was not wholly convinced by Cyril's argument. The metaphor of the seal really suits the Arian argument better than Cyril's. Starting with this disadvantage Cyril must at last substitute a metaphor that is more congenial to his point of view. It must be admitted Cyril has not really sought to understand the other's difficulties with the doctrine but has highhandedly dismissed his statements and maintained his own doctrine by much repetition.

Although he makes no such admission here, Cyril elsewhere confesses the inadequacy of human speech to express the full truth regarding the

divine nature (P. 1, p. 294f).

'All that the Father gives me shall come to me' (vs 37) is said by Jesus as man, not that he was unable to draw believers himself, but that as man it was more fitting to attribute the drawing to the Father.

Verses 38 and 39 raise the question of what Christ both willed and did not will to do. Christ willingly underwent for our sakes insults, scourging and death but, says Cyril, if it had been possible without suffering to bring us salvation, he would not have willed to suffer. He and the Father agreed that he should undergo whatever was necessary for salvation. His goodness is seen in his choosing to do what he did not wish to do, for our sakes. The prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane is quoted in proof and also the saying 'The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak', which is applied to the struggle within Christ which the prayer reveals (P. 1, pp. 436 - 438).

Since this interpretation would not satisfy those who used verse 38 to assert the involuntary subjection of the Son to the Father, Cyril enters upon a lengthy discussion of the relationship between Father and Son. His argument is not drawn so much from an exegesis of Scripture as from philosophical reasoning and will therefore not be summarized here. Finally, if his opponent should still maintain that this passage asserts the Son's subjection of necessity to the Father, it would mean, Cyril states, that their wills were in opposition. But if the Father wills the salvation of all that he gives to the Son, and the Son's will is opposed to this, the Son is shown to be neither loving nor good to man and that, of course, would be blasphemy (P. 1, pp. 438 - 499).

In the statement that no one has seen the Father but he who is of God (vs 46) Cyril finds further proof of Christ's identity in essence with the Father. Since all things are 'of God' (II Cor. v.13) yet none but he sees the Father, 'of God' in this instance must be understood of God's essence. All else is of God by creation but he alone of God by nature. In what manner he beholds the Father we cannot say but only that it must be in a way worthy of God (P. 1, p. 511f).

Admitting the obscurity of verse 57, Cyril enters upon a long exposition of the relationship between Father and Son in explanation of the thesis at the head of this chapter of his commentary, which reads:

That the Son is not a partaker of life from any other but rather life by nature as being begotten of God the Father who is life by nature.

(P. 1, p. 537)

The sending has reference to the incarnation, which means that the Son was made wholly man. Being by nature life and made man by the Father, the Son transformed his flesh completely to his own life so that he who receives him through participation in his flesh, shall be wholly transformed into the Son who is life-giving. 'I live because of the living Father' means 'I retain the natural excellence of him who begot me' (P. 1, p. 537f).

As with regard to verse 27, we again have the Arian interpretation that the Father must be greater than the Son since the Son clearly states that he partakes of life from the Father. That view makes the Son nothing but a creature, replies Cyril and cites texts which declare Jesus to be true God and eternal life (Jn xi.25; I Jn i.1,2; v.20).

Continuing the dialogue, the Arian declares that the Son is only life because he has the living Father in him. In answer Cyril says iron is not called fire because it has been heated. Unless he is life by nature the Son is still just a creature, subject to decay and since he is said to be in the Father as the Father in him, the Father is now found to have within himself what is destitute of life, that is, a decaying nature. In much the same way as in the earlier section (*supra* p. 255) the argument leads to the absurdity that we creatures may also say we are life. Cyril finishes the passage with a further emphatic statement of the identity of nature in Father and Son (P. 1, pp. 539 - 544).

With reference to the titles Peter attributes to Jesus, Cyril explains the use of the article which sets him apart:

We must know that he is not called Christ on his own account, or as essentially so as he is Son, yet he is One in truth and in a special degree (for no one among the anointed is like him) except that in respect of his likeness to us he is called Christ. For his own proper and specially distinct name and reality in truth is Son, but that which is common with us is Christ. For since he was anointed insofar as he became man, he is therefore Christ. If then we attribute the being anointed to the need of human nature, he will be considered as Christ in respect of his likeness to us and not in the same way as he is Son.

(P. 1, p. 576f)

Perhaps Cyril is thinking here of the anointing with chrism Christians received after baptism. The mystery of the incarnation is again stated with the doctrine of the two natures in one Christ. Cyril has repeated this doctrine at several points in the course of his exposition (P. 1, pp. 442, 529, 532, 550).

In the course of his treatment of the sixth chapter of the Gospel Cyril has given considerable space to dogmatic teaching in accordance

with his stated purpose. In christology, which has been his chief dogmatic concern, the relationship of the Son to the Father receives the fullest treatment. In opposition to Arianism, he emphasizes the full divine nature of Christ. His full humanity is maintained when discussing the relationship between his two natures, divine and human, but the greater emphasis is on holding the unity of his person.

Soteriology

The importance of these doctrines appears when he tells us what constitutes salvation, i.e., to be "made partakers of the divine nature and be thus brought back to incorruption and life and be reformed to the pristine fashion of our nature" (P. 1, p. 479).

Verse 40 indicates the manner in which men are brought to the Son and the benefit they receive. It is by the Father's giving each through knowledge and contemplation a true apprehension of the Son so that he may be understood to be truly God. The Son by engrafting into men his own good and shedding on them the life-giving power of the Spirit reforms them for immortality. Yet this is not to be understood as though Father and Son had each his own individual part in the process for they are co-workers in such a way that the complete process is the work of the Trinity as a whole.⁶³ The identity of nature is emphatically stated. If the Father is known in him who is Son by nature, they must be of the same essence. If the Father is life by nature and the Son can give life, he too must be life. This relationship is Cyril's great concern. It is affirmed

63. This idea is affirmed again in comment on verses 45 and 57 (P. 1, pp. 508 and 538).

again in similar terms when commenting upon verse 44 (P. 1, pp. 499, 500, 506).

Having maintained Christ's divinity, he then asserts his humanity in connection with verse 42. The Jews should have known from the prophecies that Christ was to come in human form for he had to be in all things made like his brethren that he might call man's nature into sonship with God (P. 1, p. 502f). His humanity must be complete if he is to save mankind.

The Father's drawing of men to the Son is shown by Jesus (vs 45) not to be by compulsion or force.

For where there is hearing and learning and the benefit of instruction there is faith by persuasion and not of necessity ... for the word of doctrine requires that free will and free choice should be preserved to the soul of man in order that it may ask the just rewards of its good deeds and if it shall have fallen from the right and because of heedlessness transgressed the will of the lawgiver, it may very reasonably receive the penalty of its transgression.

(P. 1, p. 507f)

And again

God the Father will be conceived of as having implanted in us the knowledge of his own offspring not by a voice breaking forth from above and resounding round the earth like thunder but by the divine illumination shining forth as it were in us to the understanding of the divinely inspired Scripture.

(P. 1, p. 510)

Again he states the unity of the Godhead in the work of illumination.

Elsewhere Cyril comments upon verse 44 that the Father "draws of course by light and knowledge and the cords of love" (On Luke Serm. cxxxii).⁶⁴

64. ET R.P. Smith, A Commentary upon the Gospel According to St. Luke by S. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria Vol. II (Oxford, 1859), p. 613.

Cyril seeks to interpret the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. He has given his flesh as a ransom for all that he may bring all to life. "For death shall die in my death and with me shall rise again the fallen nature of man" (P. 1, p. 518). It was for this reason he became man for in no other way could "death and he who has the power of death" be destroyed. He offered himself as a spotless sacrifice to God, in some way undergoing punishment for all. However, he was not overpowered by death since he was by nature life. The life-giving Word, by indwelling the flesh, rendered it life-giving and so the body of Christ expels death, gives life to and removes corruption from all who partake of it. The influence of his resurrection extends to the whole nature of man so that all men will be raised, those who did good to the resurrection of life, those who did evil to the resurrection of condemnation (Jn v.29; P. 1, pp. 518 - 520).

In his commentary on Luke Cyril quotes almost the whole of the passage John vi.47-57 when he is dealing with the Last Supper and further remarks:

When, therefore, we eat the holy flesh of Christ, the Saviour of us all, and drink his precious blood, we have life in us, being made as it were one with him and abiding in him and possessing him also in us.

Some, he says, inquire whether the body of each of us is not, therefore, endowed with the power of giving life. But Cyril explains:

It is a perfectly different thing for the Son to be in us by a relative participation and for him to become flesh, that is, to make that body his own which was taken from the blessed Virgin. For he is not said to become incarnate and be made flesh by being in us but rather this happened once for all when he became man without ceasing to be God ... It was fitting, therefore, for him to be in us both divinely

by the Holy Ghost, and also, so to speak, to be mingled with our bodies by his holy flesh and precious blood, which things also we possess as a life-giving eucharist, in the form of bread and wine. For lest we should be terrified by seeing (actual) flesh and blood placed upon the holy tables of our churches, God, humbling himself to our infirmities, infuses into the things set before us the power of life and transforms them into the efficacy of his flesh, that we may have them for a life-giving participation and that the body of (him who is the) life may be found in us as a life-producing seed.

(On Luke Serm. cxlii)⁶⁵

In the commentary on John Cyril rebukes the Jews for seeking to know how Christ gives his flesh to be eaten (vs 52,53; cf supra p. 244). Let them tell us, he says, how the mighty acts of God were performed which accompanied their deliverance from Egypt and their entrance into Canaan. The one is as inexplicable as the other (P. 1, p. 527). Referring to the words of Isaiah (vii.9 LXX) 'If you will not believe neither shall you understand', Cyril says that Jesus refrained at that time from revealing how he would give his flesh to men and only made it known to the disciples, who had come to believe, at the Last Supper. Peter's choice of words is commended (vs 69), placing belief and knowledge in their proper order, by quotation of this same verse from Isaiah, but Cyril asserts also the necessity of deeper investigation into spiritual matters that one's faith may mature (P. 1, p. 576). Even in his earthly life, when Jesus raised the dead (Lk viii.54; vii.14 cited), it was not by his word only

but that he might show that his own body was life-giving he touches the dead thereby also infusing life into those already decayed. And if by the touch alone of his holy flesh, he gives life to what is decayed, how

65. ET R.P. Smith, *ibid.*, p. 667f.

shall we not profit still more richly by the life-
giving Blessing⁶⁶ when we also taste it?
(P. 1, p. 530f)

The manner of the believer's dwelling in Christ and Christ in him (vs 56) is said to be like the joining of two pieces of wax so that they are mixed up and mingled together as one.⁶⁷ As Paul speaks of a little leaven leavening the whole lump (I Cor. v.6) "so the least portion of the Blessing (i.e. the eucharist) blends our whole body with itself and fills it with its own mighty working and so Christ comes to be in us and we again in him" (P. 1, p. 535). An entreaty is made to those who from a feeling of unworthiness will not partake of the eucharist. When will you be worthy? asks Cyril, for, if you are always to be frightened away by your stumbling, you will never cease from stumbling (P. 1, p. 536).

Immortality appears to signify for Cyril the supreme good which man can desire. The hope of eternal life is held out by Jesus to the Jews as an inducement to faith "inciting them to a desire of living in greater preparation for unfading pleasures" (P. 1, p. 528). The reward of faith is a lasting and endless life in bliss (P. 1, p. 499). It is a prize so envied that Jesus, the wise teacher, almost constrains the Jews against their will to believe, "for what would be more precious than eternal life to them to whom death and the sufferings from decay are bitter?" (P. 1, p. 512).

The doubts about Jesus' teaching which troubled the minds of those who heard him (vs 60) are expressed by Cyril in the question:

66. A frequent term for the eucharist in Cyril, cf P. 1, p. 475, l. 16; p. 479, l. 10; p. 501, l. 23; p. 529, l. 24; p. 534, l. 23; p. 535, l. 20.

67. Cf also P. 2, p. 542, l. 24.

How can the human body implant in us everlasting life, what can a thing of like nature with ourselves avail to immortality? (P. 1, p. 549). Christ's reply is first the confirmation of the power of his flesh, that will be given in his ascension.

If you suppose that my flesh cannot put life into you, how can it ascend into heaven like a bird? ... But if it ascends contrary to nature, what is to hinder it from quickening also, even though its nature be not to quicken, of its own nature?

(P. 1, p. 550)

Then in verse 63 the reason and source of its power of giving life is explained. Alone and by itself the nature of flesh is not life-giving. But, says Cyril, when the mystery of the incarnation is considered and who it is who dwells in this flesh, you will surely believe that, just as honey can make sweet things which are not naturally so, God the Word causes the flesh in which he dwells to be life-giving. After the latter half of the verse is quoted Cyril continues:

For he now calls the flesh Spirit, not turning it aside from being flesh; but because by reason of its being perfectly united to him and now endued with his whole life-giving power, it ought to be called Spirit too.

Christ is regarded as saying:

For my whole exposition to you was of the divine Spirit and of eternal life ... the words then in which I have conversed with you are spirit, that is, spiritual and of the Spirit and are life, that is, life-giving and of that which is by nature life.

After much repetition of his teaching, Cyril writes:

But the 'how' is neither to be apprehended by the mind, nor spoken by the tongue, but honoured in silence and faith above understanding.

(P. 1, pp. 551 - 553)

Verse 64 is looked upon as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy that

the Jews would neither understand nor believe (Isa. vi.9f LXX). Although the acknowledgment of Christ is a gift of the Father's right hand (vs 65), he does not give it to the unclean nor to those accustomed to unbelief "for not on mud is it right that the precious ointment should be poured out" (P. 1, p. 555). Cyril considers the question why he who was perfectly good and came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, did not pour out his grace upon the Jews and pardon them. Some of those who had lived more noble lives were saved, he says, but the rest, having shown themselves unworthy of everlasting life, did not receive illumination. God is just and his judgments are in agreement with his nature, "even if we do not understand the manner of the economy which is above us" (P. 1, p. 556f).

Wilken notes that recreation, renewal, transformation and restoration are concepts which Cyril uses to describe the new thing that Christ has effected for man.⁶⁸ This can be accomplished only by one who is by nature life-giving and divine. Again he says, "In no other way was what had fallen into death to be raised again to life unless the only begotten Word of God became man" (P. 1, p. 496). Christ's unity with mankind is such that just as he humbled himself for the sake of men and rose again to glory, they too will rise with him and become gods by grace (*θεοὶ κατὰ χάριν*; P. 1, p. 423). As Wiles writes, "The completeness of his identification with man on the one hand and with God on the other are of equal importance in order that he may provide the link between the two".⁶⁹ Cyril's christological concern is really soteriological concern (supra p. 253) for he is thus seen to accept

68. R.L. Wilken, op. cit., p. 115.

69. M.F. Wiles, The Spiritual Gospel, p. 149f.

the two axioms on which the early Church based its concept of how man's salvation could be accomplished, namely, that "the work of salvation can only be effected by one who is fully divine" and "that which is not assumed is not healed."⁷⁰

Obscurity in the Discourse

Cyril gives his explanation of the enigmatic nature of Jesus' discourse. Christ's purpose in shrouding his speech in obscurity is that while his words do not lie unveiled before the unholy and profane, they may yet be understood by the wise. However, if in his audience there are those who because of foolishness understand nothing of what he says, he speaks clearly and openly of the mysteries that their unbelief may be without defence. Jesus' own statement (Mt xiii.13) is brought forward in confirmation (P. 1, p. 470f). If looked upon as an actual speech of Jesus, as Cyril certainly regarded it, the whole passage must have been almost equally obscure to his hearers, especially if taken as teaching about the eucharist. Cyril's idea of Jesus' intention, therefore, seems quite unconvincing as an explanation of the way in which it is developed by Jesus. He later admits that for the uninstructed the discourse is hard to understand, requiring the understanding of faith rather than investigation and that this is why Jesus goes over the same ground so often in it (P. 1, p. 534).

The repetition of ideas in the passage (vs 48-51) reveals Christ in the manner of a physician applying repeated applications of the

70. M.F. Wiles, "Soteriological Arguments in the Fathers" TU 94, 1966, 322.

remedy to the disease of the Jews (P. 1, p. 516f). What he has previously said obscurely he now makes perfectly plain. Quoting John xv.22, Cyril states that at the judgment those who can plead that they had never heard the word^{of} salvation will receive a milder sentence than those who, many times admonished, perversely refuse to believe (P. 1, p. 517f).

In his commentary on Luke a similar conception is expressed by Cyril when explaining the forgiveness that is declared for those who have spoken against the Son of man (Lk xii.10). To illustrate he draws upon John vi. When Jesus called himself the living bread there were those who, thinking he was a mere man and ignorant of his glory, said 'Is not this the carpenter's son whose father and mother we know?' (Jn vi.42). Cyril says, "Such things might well be forgiven, as being spoken inconsiderately from ignorance" (On Luke Serm. lxxxviii).⁷¹ Incidentally, we see here that the same individuals who in the commentary on John are considered to have recognized Jesus' divinity (*supra* p. 244) and therefore to have been perverse when they later murmured against him and so without excuse, are here represented as merely ignorant and therefore to be pardoned.

Perhaps in an attempt to clear up what he regards as not plain enough in Jesus' speech, Cyril not infrequently reads more into Jesus' words than they warrant. He regards the question of the people in verse 28 as insincere, their attitude being that of the young man in Matthew xix.16f for they arrogantly suppose that they already know all that is necessary. Jesus, in his reply (vs 29), says Cyril, does not

71. ET R.P. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

command simply belief in him as the words themselves would seem to suggest, but emphatically opposes the fruit of faith to the worship of the Law with its burnt offerings and sacrifices (P. 1, pp. 451 - 453).

Again verse 37b is to be taken not only as a gracious promise to those who believe but also as a veiled threat to unbelievers, for it also signifies that he will surely cast out him who does not come (P. 1, p. 481).

When Jesus inquires of the twelve if they also will leave him (vs 67), Cyril reads into his question a threat that if they do not show themselves superior to the undisciplined Jews, they will be sent away into perdition. Indeed, his simple question is expanded into the following:

If you unhesitatingly believe my words, if without any wavering you receive the mystery with simple faith, if it seems bitter to you and intolerably infamous that my words are accused of being hard, if you refuse to say like the Jews 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?', I will be glad to see you with me and rejoice to live with you and love you as my own, but if you choose to think like those who have fallen back, I both tell you to run away with them and justly drive you away. For I shall not lack worshippers, seeing the gospel message shall be preached not in Judea alone but is already going into the whole world.

(P. 1, p. 560)

Is Cyril not imposing upon Christ here his own attitude towards those who doubt his teaching and question his authority? Perhaps the passage reflects the fact that as bishop of one of the most important sees of the Church he expected unquestioning obedience in conduct and belief. In the religious controversies of the age no half measures or ambiguous statements of belief were acceptable. It was of course an

age when authority in church and state was more readily accepted than in the present one.

From our consideration of Cyril's exegesis of this passage from John we have seen that he has given greatest prominence to the exposition of Christ's nature, at once human and divine, and of his status as identical in nature and power with the Father. The eucharistic treatment of Christ's teaching seems more to be taken for granted than something requiring specific exposition. At least it receives less attention than christological teaching. He has also particular interest in Christ as a wonder-worker and in an allegorical and typological kind of exegesis. He displays not only a strong anti-heretical motivation but also an implacable animosity towards Judaism.

IX. APPRAISAL

In this chapter the exegesis we have considered will be used to point out by way of comparison and contrast certain features of the fathers' thought. Their ways of resolving the problem of contradictions in Scripture will be examined and the manner in which their interpretation of certain verses was determined by theological controversy indicated. The recurrence of the ideas of earlier writers in the work of later ones will be pointed out. Finally, some of the verses which were of especial interest to them will be examined to show the degree of agreement that may be discerned in their interpretations as well as the very different meanings they sometimes drew from a given passage. In the course of the discussion attention will be drawn to the ideas of some modern commentators who appear to agree with the fathers or express themselves in very similar terms.

Contradictions in Scripture.

It is interesting to compare the ways in which the writers we have studied deal with the problem of contradictory texts. Since nearly all the fathers held that the Scriptures could contain neither error nor falsehood, verses which appeared to contradict each other proved especially troublesome, particularly when one or the other of such verses was favourable to a heretical interpretation.

Novatian's solution to the contradiction between Genesis xii.7 and Exodus xxxiii.20 (supra p. 105) is that it was Christ who appeared in the theophanies to the patriarchs. It is a solution limited to a

special case. The example we have from Hilary's exegesis in connection with John vi.64 (supra p.166) is also of limited application. He interprets one of the texts, Mark xiii.32, in such a way as really to deny its plain meaning. Christ's ignorance must be shown to be something other than ignorance — it is not the proper time for Christ to speak or act. Athanasius considered the evangelist's comment a sufficient explanation of the implied ignorance in Jesus' inquiry (supra p. 120) — Jesus was testing Philip. He suggests also that the ignorance was proper to Christ's manhood, though not to his Godhead. A modern view regards the limitation of Jesus' knowledge as part of the kenosis that accompanied his becoming man. Beasley-Murray says: "It was a genuine limitation of his human consciousness" and speaks of it as "a profound insight into the nature of his incarnation."¹ Cranfield writes: "The full reality of the incarnation involved such ignorance on the part of Jesus during his earthly life."²

The problem is a much larger one for Origen for it is not a matter of a few texts of a contradictory nature but a question of the whole chronology of the Gospel story. John's chronology and that of the Synoptic Gospels cannot both be right at the same time. He therefore asserted that the writers wove both historical and non-historical passages together, inserting the latter for the sake of the spiritual teaching they wished to convey. Only thus was he able to maintain the unity of the four Gospels. It was not, however, his only means of dealing with the problem for occasionally we find a different explanation given. When comparing the Baptist's words about his own unworthiness

1. G.R. Beasley-Murray, Jesus and the Future (London, 1956), p. 263f.

2. C.E.B. Cranfield, The Gospel According to Saint Mark (Cambridge, 1959), p. 411.

in John 1.27 with the expressions reported by the other evangelists (Mt iii.11 esp.) he concludes that they cannot all refer to the one event but must be reporting what John said on different occasions (Com. in Joh. VI.34, GCS 4, p. 143).

It is this latter concept that Chrysostom uses when he finds two or more exangelists relating what seem to be different versions of the same event (*supra* p. 153). The differences are so great he thinks they must be quite separate and distinct occurrences. Augustine, on the contrary, provides a harmonization in which he fits the different versions together. Since each writer has told only selected portions of what actually took place, the portions must be fitted together like a jigsaw puzzle for the full account (*supra* p. 195f). Theodore regards John's chronology as more reliable than that of the synoptists (Vosté, p. 5). Like Chrysostom (Hom. in Joh. xxiii.2, PG LIX.139f), he thinks it probable that the temple was cleansed twice by Jesus, but if it were only once, John's dating is to be preferred for the other writers were concerned only to relate the facts, paying no attention to the order of events (Vosté, p. 53). Origen's solution is the most radical and none of the later writers follow his lead.

The problem of how John is to be related to the Synoptic Gospels is still exercising the minds of theologians with something very like the same solutions still being proposed. E.F. Harrison, examining one of the same incidents considered by Origen, the cleansing of the temple (Com. in Joh. X.25, GCS 4, p. 197), speaks of those who hold the view that John's placing of the event at the opening of Jesus' ministry rather than at its close "is dictated not by historical but by

doctrinal considerations"³. This is very like the reason Origen gives for the non-historical passages. Harrison himself, however, appears to favour the proposal of a double cleansing.⁴ E.L. Titus believes "that the Fourth Gospel's story of Jesus is that of the Christ of the church superimposed on an artificially constructed historical career."⁵ He says that the evangelist's method of writing "all but cancels out historical details".⁶ The individuals of the narrative, Nathaniel, the Samaritan woman, Thomas, "are not historical personages, but symbolic types." "The truth of the idea expressed is independent of the historical accuracy of the incident used to set it forth".⁷ This is going even farther than Origen but it is in accord with the trend of his thought. In Temple's opinion we have the kind of reliance upon John expressed by Theodore, for he says: "The fact is that the Synoptists provide no chronology of the ministry at all until the last week; we do not have to choose between two incompatible chronologies for the Johannine chronology is the only one that we have."⁸

The Role of Controversy.

Perhaps the feature which stands out with greatest prominence in the fathers' exegesis of John is the role that controversy played in their interpretations.

3. E.F. Harrison, "Historical Problems in the Fourth Gospel" BS 116, 1959, 209.

4. Ibid., p. 210.

5. E.L. Titus, "The Fourth Gospel and History" JHR 24, 1956, 162.

6. Ibid., p. 163.

7. Ibid., p. 166.

8. W. Temple op. cit., p. xi.

It has been suggested that the Fourth Gospel was opposed in the second century by an orthodox group at Rome, called Alogi, on the grounds that it was a Gnostic writing.⁹ Pollard thinks that it was Irenaeus' use of it in refuting Gnosticism that helped greatly to dispel the Church's distrust of it as a writing popular among the Gnostics.¹⁰ Thus it was involved in controversy from a very early period of its use. It is from Hippolytus' treatise against heresies that we have examples of Naassene exegesis of John.

In the passages we have considered from Tertullian's writings, those which employ John vi.63 to affirm a bodily resurrection sound very much as though written expressly in contradiction of those who denied such a doctrine and who probably were using that very verse in support of their argument (*supra* p. 82). In his treatise against Praxeas Tertullian wrote to oppose monarchian doctrine (*supra* p. 79). Again we have seen that Cyprian used parts of the sixth chapter in stating the Church's position with respect to schismatics (*supra* p. 97ff). In this case Cyprian is not refuting a rival exegesis but simply supporting his own doctrine of the Church with scriptural proof. Novatian expressly states that he is writing against heretical ideas of the relationship between the Father and the Son (*De Trin.* xiv, F. p. 46). In the passage quoted (*supra* p. 104) the repeated phrase, 'If Christ is only man', indicates the nature of the heretical teaching he opposes, a form of adoptionism. He was fighting on more than one front for he also opposes Sabellianism (*De Trin.* xii, F. p. 41). In Chapter XXVI,

9. B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London, 1927), p. 436f; J.N. Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

10. T.E. Pollard, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

verse 33 is one among many verses used to refute the Sabellian view which regarded the Father and the Son simply as two names for one and the same being¹¹ (F. p. 95).

In the Arian controversy the Fourth Gospel played a leading part for many of the favourite texts of the Arians were to be found in it. The fathers directed their attention to interpreting those texts in such a way as to support their own beliefs and to deny the Arian teaching. Verse 33 (For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me) stands out as one of the passages of the sixth chapter around which debate revolved. That chapter, however, did not supply either side with its most important arguments in the dispute. We have noted some instances from Athanasius' writings against the Arians when he makes use of John vi (supra p. 119f). It plays some part also in the work of the three Cappadocians (supra pp. 138 , 142f) and is used by both Hilary and Ambrose in their refutation of Arianism (supra pp. 164f, 179ff). Theodore's remarks on the sixth chapter do not appear to attack Arian teaching directly. His approach is to set forth his doctrines in a more positive manner. Cyril, however, writing specifically to refute false doctrines, is continually alive to the heretical interpretations of the passages he is discussing and directly attacks them whenever occasion offers. His polemics are not confined to Arianism but also include attacks against the Jews.

In Chrysostom's sermons on the chapter we have noted the following passage in which he opposed Manichean teaching which denied freewill to

11. J.F. Bethune-Baker, op. cit., p. 105.

man.

The Manicheans spring upon these words saying that nothing lies in our own power, yet the expression shows that we are masters of our will. 'For if a man comes to him,' says someone, 'what need is there of drawing?' But the words do not take away our free will but show that we greatly need assistance. And he implies not an unwilling comer but one enjoying much succour.

(Hom. in Joh. xlv.1, PG LIX.257f)

Like Theodore his attitude in general appears more positive than polemical.

During his long episcopate Augustine had occasion to enter into controversy with a number of heresies. In the exegesis we have examined he has used parts of John's sixth chapter in justifying the Church's right to use coercion against schismatics (p. 213), in opposing Pelagian teaching on the fate of unbaptized children (p. 218), and in countering their views on faith and works (p. 220). Although in Tractatus xxvi he makes a passing reference to Arius as the heretic who believed Jesus to be a creature and therefore was not drawn by the Father (Tract. in Joh. xxvi.5, CCEL 36, p. 262; supra p. 212), he appears seldom to attack heretics directly in his sermons on this portion of John's Gospel. When he is dealing in them with Christ's nature and relationship to the Father, although it may be assumed his views are stated against the background of the christological controversies, he presents them without direct reference to the heretical teaching.

Recurrence of Ideas and Themes.

Certain ideas have appeared frequently enough in the course of this study to indicate that they were of a traditional nature and accepted by the majority of the fathers of the early Church. The inspiration and truth of Scripture were regarded by them as applying to the minutest

details. Since God does nothing in vain, the smallest particulars are fraught with spiritual significance and in the course of exegesis the fathers are led to devise farfetched, even tortured, interpretations for simple prosaic details which it is difficult to believe the original authors intended as anything more than incidental colouring to give interest and realism to the narrative (Chrysostom, "Nothing is put by chance in divine Scripture", p. 150; Augustine, "Nothing, therefore is idle, everything is significant, only it requires one who understands", p. 198; Cyril, p. 247f). This practice, of course, is to be observed in the work of those who commented upon the Gospel in detail rather than with those who select particular verses from it as support for doctrine.

Although in Origen's work we have not met any statement so clear and explicit as in the later commentators, his practice in allegorizing the minutiae of the text makes it apparent that he subscribed to the same principle. The interpretation of numbers and names in the fathers is in line with that conception of exegesis. In the sixth chapter the practice of seeing significance in minor points of the story is clearly seen in comment upon verse 10. Of the sitting upon the grass Augustine says that it means resting in carnal things. Although Origen's exegesis of John vi is lost he had seen significance in the same detail when commenting on the miracle as related by Matthew. The command to sit on the grass is a command to keep the mind of the flesh in subjection (Com. in Matt. xi.3, GCS 10, p. 38). Both authors quote Isaiah xl.6, 'All flesh is grass,' but draw distinctly different inferences in its application. Cyril sees the reclining on grass as a symbol of the delight of those who are blessed by Christ and as referring to Psalm

xxiii (supra p.248). Theodore, on the contrary, does not allegorize the reference to grass but simply comments on the pleasantness of the locality during Nisan (supra p. 225). Chrysostom does not refer to the writer's mention of grass at all. Though he and Theodore take note of many small details in the Gospel, their tendency is not to allegorize them in the manner of Cyril or Augustine, but to draw from them some reasonable deduction as to the motives or intentions of the persons in the narrative. From the fact that Jesus spoke at Capernaum in the synagogue (vs 59) Chrysostom concludes that, since most of his marvels had been done there, he ought especially to have received a hearing in that place. He chose the synagogue so that he might catch the greatest number of people and might show that he was not opposed to the Father (Hom. in Joh. xlvii.1.2, PG LIX.264). From the manner in which the writer relates the murmuring of the disciples, Theodore infers that they spoke only among themselves and suggests the reason for this.

Superfluously, to be sure, would he say 'knowing within himself' if this was said openly by the disciples. But for the sake of honour, reverencing him as is fitting for disciples, they considered this within themselves.

(Vosté, p. 108)¹²

In addition Chrysostom draws moral lessons from such incidental features of the narrative (supra p. 150). Neither of them are given to the interpretation of numbers in the manner of Augustine.

An idea which seems to have become almost an axiom, at least for the later fathers, appears in the exegesis of John vi.69 with both Augustine and Cyril. It is the idea that faith must precede understanding, which they found expressed in the LXX reading of Isaiah vii.9. Both writers approve Peter's form of confession on account of his recognition

12. Cf also supra p. 226.

of the priority of faith (supra pp 210f 262). Rufinus also in his commentary on the Creed writes: "We have shown that nothing can possibly be done or remain stable unless belief precede" (Com. in Sym. Ap. 3, PL XXI.340) and states that belief is required if one would come to the knowledge of God. Earlier writers had made reference to this concept in other contexts. In his fifth catechetical lecture Cyril of Jerusalem says: "Faith is an eye that enlightens every conscience and imparts understanding," and then quotes the prophet's words: "If you do not believe, you shall not understand" (Cat. V.4, PG XXXIII.509). Tertullian had also employed the verse in his argument against Marcion. In commenting on the cure of the woman with a haemorrhage, he states that her faith, by which she discerned that God was in Christ, had enabled her to understand that her infirmity needed only the mercy of God, and that she did not break the law in touching Christ. Her faith, he says, was of the kind that conferred intelligence. He then adds the verse from Isaiah (Adv. Marc. IV.20.13, CSEL I, p. 597). In two other passages he uses the verse, intimating in one that it is a threat to Jewish unbelievers (Adv. Marc. V.11.9, CSEL I, p. 698) and in the other saying that faith opens the understanding so that what is concealed in the words of the prophets may be comprehended (Adv. Marc. IV.25.3, CSEL I, p. 611). Cyprian makes use of it twice as a proof text in his testimonies for the following propositions: "The Jews can understand nothing of the Scriptures unless they have first believed in Christ" (Ad Quir. I.5, CSEL 3, p. 43); "Faith is useful in all things; we can do as much as we believe" (Ad Quir. III.42, CSEL 3, p. 150).

A further instance of traditional exegesis that is disclosed by

this study is the application of the discourse in John vi to interpret the petition for daily bread in the Lord's Prayer. Tertullian and Cyprian give similar interpretations with reference to both the necessities of this life and the eucharist, dwelling more particularly on the latter as that which incorporates the believer into the Church as the body of Christ (*supra* pp. 79,92). Origen denies any reference to material bread, says nothing of the eucharist, but regards the petition as a request for divine truth and the spiritual power it imparts (*supra* p. 65f). Augustine recognizes all three of these meanings as possible but prefers the last. Indeed he would only admit the former two as subsidiary to what he regards as the true interpretation, divine precepts (*supra* p. 219). All these writers make use of the Johannine passage. Its use, however, was not an invariable tradition, for Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose of Milan, in expounding the prayer for the newly baptized, assign to it only a eucharistic meaning but make no reference to John vi (*Cat. Myst.* v.15, *PG* XXXIII.1119; *De Sac.* v.24.25.26, *CSEL* 73, p. 63ff). Chrysostom and Theodore characteristically prefer only the literal sense of material bread for the body, and therefore, of course, do not refer to John vi (*Chrys., Hom. in Matt.* xix.5, *PG* LVII.280; *Theo., Lib. ad Bapt.*, *WE* VI, p. 11f). Each of them stresses the term 'daily' as indicating that we should ask for no more than is necessary. We may see in the exegesis of the petition the difference in outlook between the Antiochene and Alexandrian schools and observe that the western fathers appear to follow the Alexandrian example in spiritualizing the meaning of the bread. In view of this it comes as a surprise to find that Cyril of Alexandria, in his homily on the Lukan form of the prayer

regards the petition as one for the necessities of this life and rejects the idea that it refers to the bread 'that came down from heaven and gave life to the world'. It teaches, he thinks, that men should practise saint-like poverty since they ask for the bare necessities of life a day at a time (Com. in Luc. V.3, PG LXXII.693).

The manner in which the miracles of John vi are interpreted again illustrates the divergence between Alexandrian and Antiochene traditions, and again the Latin fathers favour the former method. Chrysostom and Theodore, representing the latter, do not allegorize them. They marvel at the supernatural power exercised by Jesus, seeing in it the proof of his divinity.¹³ They are both interested in the purpose and intention behind the words and actions of Jesus and the disciples. The Lord's questioning of Philip and Andrew is seen by both as intended to prepare them for the miracle by causing them to realize the poverty of their resources so that it might appear the more marvellous (Chrys., Hom. in Joh. xlii.2, PG LIX.241; Vosté, pp. 93, 94). Chrysostom's penchant for moral lessons is also apparent. Jesus' prayer teaches that we should give thanks before meals (Hom. in Joh. xlii.2, PG LIX.242). Theodore has a similar comment in this case although he is not given to moralizing like Chrysostom (Vosté, p. 94).

Cyril and Augustine, on the other hand, both interpret the second miracle as an allegory of the Church (*supra* pp.200f ,249). The details of the feeding of the multitude offer them scope for much curious allegory (*supra* pp.198 ,248). Some very similar interpretations are to be found in earlier writers. When Origen examines the miracle in his commentary on Matthew, he says of the loaves and fish:

13. "Why did he not go up into the ship? Because he would make the marvel greater, would more openly reveal to them his Godhead" Chrys., Hom. in Joh. xliii.1, PG LIX.246; cf *supra* p. 150; "This is a sign of great power" Theo., Vosté, p. 94; similarly to Chrys. re entering the boat, Vosté, p. 96; cf *supra* p. 227.

Perhaps by the five loaves they meant to make a veiled reference to the sensible words of the Scriptures, corresponding on this account to the five senses, but by the two fish either to the word expressed and the word conceived, which are a relish, so to speak, to the sensible things contained in the Scriptures, or perhaps to the word which had come to them about the Father and the Son.

(Com. in Matt. xi.2, GCS 10, p. 35)

He mentions the ways in which John varies from Matthew, such as the fact that he says the loaves are of barley and brought by a young lad. Hilary, in expounding the Matthean account of the miracle, calls the loaves the five books of the Law and the fish the teachings of the prophets and of John the Baptist (Com. in Matt. xiv.10, PL IX.1000).

For those who regard the passage as filled with hidden meanings, the loaves and fish appear always to be related in some way to the Scriptures or preaching, although the way in which this is expressed varies. That interpretation is maintained to some extent also with respect to the fragments remaining. Although Origen's remarks are not clearly expressed he appears to regard the remnants as teachings of a higher character which the crowd was unable to accept or understand but which were entrusted to the disciples as those superior in understanding (Com. in Matt. xi.2, GCS 10, pp. 36f). For Augustine they are also hidden truths which the people cannot receive, to be taught at a later time by the apostles (*supra* p.198). Cyril thinks of them as representing the reward the disciples will receive for their ministry (*supra* p.²⁴⁹). He recognizes a more practical purpose for them also in that they both increase the marvel and prove the reality of the miracle (*supra* p.²⁴⁷). It is only with respect to their use in this more practical sphere that Theodore and Chrysostom refer to them.

They will assist in spreading abroad a knowledge of the miracle (*supra* p.226). They prove the miracle was no illusion (Hom. in Joh. xlii.3, PG LIX.242). That is their significance for Ephrem also (*supra* p. 111).

Verses of Special Interest to the Fathers.

In the fathers' exegesis of the sixth chapter of John certain verses receive more particular attention than the rest. It is interesting to bring together the insights of those we have studied on verses of this nature to see in what ways they are agreed as to their significance and also to show the very different meanings they sometimes found in them.

38. For I came down from heaven,
not to do my own will, but the
will of him that sent me.

Verse 38 is of this type. One of its usages is simply in teaching that God's will ought to be obeyed. In their works on the Lord's Prayer, for instance, Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine support the petition that God's will may be done by reference to verse 38 (*supra* pp. 81, 90, 217f). Origen, Chrysostom, Theodore and Cyril of Alexandria, on the other hand, do not employ it in comment on that petition of the prayer. It is used with the same purpose in Cyprian's De Habitu Virginum (*supra* p.90). Basil applies it in the case of monks to the obedience due by them to their superiors and in describing the attitude that one in authority should display (*supra* p. 137f). The obedience of Christ is thus held up as an example to be followed. Similarly from the example of Christ Augustine draws a lesson in humility by means of this verse (*supra* p.217).

The verse receives a more doctrinal application in writings of the christological controversies. Tertullian makes allusion to it in

contrasting the Valentinian teaching about emanations from the Godhead with the Christian teaching of the intimacy between the Father and the Son and quotes it also when asserting the distinctions within the Godhead (*supra* p.79). It is one among a number of Johannine verses used by Novatian to maintain this distinction which was in danger of being blurred by the teaching of the patripassians (*supra* p.106). At a later period, during the Arian controversy, the emphasis was on maintaining the harmony and agreement that existed between the Father and the Son. The verse was used to illustrate this by Athanasius (*supra* p. 120). A very clear exegesis of this kind is that of Hilary (*supra* p.165f) who refutes the Arian interpretation which made the verse a witness to the subordination of the Son to the Father and to the difference in their natures. Hilary maintains that to be the perfect revelation of the Father the Son must be of the same nature but that this does not deny him a will of his own. Their wills are in perfect agreement, not from the subjection of one to the other but because of the harmony that exists between them.

In the east Gregory of Nazianzus undertook a similar task of refutation and interpretation (*supra* p.142f). Admitting the words of the verse to be appropriate to the human nature of Christ, Gregory maintains they are expressed as the statement of his divine nature and therefore show that the Father and the Son have but one will. This is immediately apparent if the practical implications of their wills being in any way opposed are considered. Theodore's comment on the verse also maintains the fact of each having a will of his own and also the complete agreement between them (*supra* p.237f). Chrysostom paraphrases

the verse thus:

I came not to do anything other than that which the
 Father wills. I have no will of my own different
 from that of the Father, for all that is the Father's
 is mine and all that is mine is the Father's.
 (Hom. in Joh. xlv.3, PG LIX.255)

The multitude, he thinks, would have despised Jesus if he had said, "This is my will"; therefore he said in effect, "I cooperate with God's will."

Cyril of Alexandria uses an argument similar to that of Gregory to the effect that the idea of Christ's subjection to the Father by necessity involves his will being opposite to that of the Father and therefore neither good nor loving towards men. But Cyril also has perhaps the most penetrating comment of all. Not content with merely asserting that both willed the same thing, he speculates as to the way in which Christ's will was involved in the work of salvation. He suggests that, although the Father and the Son were agreed that Christ should be the Saviour of men, Christ's prayer in Gethsemane shows how great an effort of will was required to reconcile him to the suffering involved in such salvation. One or two modern commentators have also shown an awareness of this insight in connection with the affirmation contained in verse 38. Barrett, although he does not develop the idea in the way Cyril had done, comments upon the verse: "The Gethsemane story is not found in John but the thought expressed in it governs the gospel as a whole"¹⁴. W.E. Hull says: "The Gethsemane spirit characterized his entire ministry, not just one episode near its end".¹⁵ Brown remarks that the same contrast between Jesus' own will

14. C.K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 244.

15. W.E. Hull, "John" The Broadman Bible Commentary Vol. 9 (London, 1970), p. 275.

and that of his Father is to be found in the Synoptic description of his agony in the garden.¹⁶

27c. For him has God the
Father sealed.

The last phrase of verse 27, "For him has God the Father sealed", received a considerable amount of comment from the fathers, especially of an anti-Arian strain. Before the Arian period the verse appears in Novatian's letter on Jewish meats but he makes no comment upon the last phrase. Basil uses it to affirm the equality of honour due to the Son in contradiction to those who wished to subordinate him in relation to the Father. He understands it in the sense of the Son being the express image of the Father for he uses the paraphrase "engraving himself on him" (De Spiritu Sancto VI.15, PG XXXII.92) and in another place says: "By means of the express image we are led up to that (i.e. glory of God) of which he is the express image and identical seal" (De Spiritu Sancto XXVI.64, PG XXXII.185). In his use of the metaphor to illustrate the perfect harmony between the Father and the Son, Gregory of Nyssa stresses the exactness of the likeness between the seal and its impression in the wax (*supra* p. 143f). Hilary criticized the use of the figure of speech as understood in that sense "because in seals there is a matter, difference of nature and an act of impression, whereby the likeness of stronger natures is impressed upon things of a more yielding nature" (*supra* p. 167). From Cyril of Alexandria's exegesis of the verse it is plain that the heretical teaching against which he writes made use of the phrase to assert that

16. R.E. Brown, The Gospel According to John (i-xii) (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), p. 270. On the other hand, G.B. Caird writes: "There is in this Gospel neither temptation in the wilderness nor agony in the Garden, no heart-searching doubt about the intentions of God. From start to finish Jesus is wholly in God's confidence" ("The Will of God" ExpT 72, 1960-1961, 115).

Please continue reading on page 288.

/the Son was

the Son was not of the essence of the Father but merely an exact likeness. Used in this way the metaphor is a more appropriate illustration of the Arian doctrine than of Cyril's and in the course of his argument Cyril changes the figure so that Christ becomes the seal imprinting himself upon man (*supra* p. 254). The phrase does not really provide an effective argument for the doctrine these fathers wished to establish, but only Hilary appears to be aware of this.

A more satisfactory interpretation of the phrase is provided by Chrysostom and Theodore. They do not use it to prove identity of essence. Theodore, indeed, denies that it has any reference to such a doctrine. They rather explain it as a way of asserting the Father's testimony to the Son's authority and truth, both of them making reference to John iii.33 as a similar usage of the idea (*supra* pp. 153f, 233). Augustine interprets the seal as a distinguishing mark set by the Father on the Son that he may be shown to be the deliverer of mankind (*supra* p. 202). He thus sees its meaning in much the same way as Chrysostom and Theodore.

Modern comment upon the expression definitely favours the opinion of these last three exegetes. Bernard suggests the reference is to Jesus' baptism interpreted as an attestation of his mission.¹⁷ Barrett's comment is very similar.¹⁸ Both refer to the early Christian custom of describing baptism as a seal. Hoskyns says: "The act of sealing is the sign of ownership and authenticity"¹⁹, a remark very close

17. J.H. Bernard, ICC John, p. 191.

18. C.K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 238.

19. E.C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, ed., F.N. Davey (London, 1940), p. 329.

to what Augustine says. Lightfoot gives the meaning of 'sealed' as 'guaranteed.'²⁰ Brown writes: "Here God sets his seal on the Son, not so much by way of approval, but more by way of consecration."²¹ Morris says: "The Father has set the seal of his approval on the Son."²²

44. No one can come to me unless
the Father who sent me draws
him; and I will raise him
up at the last day.

The fathers found that very different conclusions could be drawn from the interpretation of verse 44 and therefore set forth their own understanding of it. Chrysostom contradicted those who saw in it confirmation of their belief that men were devoid of free will (*supra* p. 151). For him it implied that men, though free, stood in need of divine help to come to faith. Augustine, too, defended man's freedom against those who drew the conclusion that men could be brought to faith against their will. Though he held that the Church was justified in using a certain salutary coercion, he maintained that in the last resort they came to believe by a free act of the will in response to the love of God. The drawing of which the verse speaks came through God's revealing within the heart the truth of the Church's teaching regarding Christ as Son of God and his equality with the Father (*supra* p. 212). Cyril of Alexandria also described the manner of the Father's drawing as an inward illumination (*supra* p. 260). Theodore's comment on the verse is not concerned with how the Father draws men to the Son

20. R.H. Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

21. R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii)*, p. 261.

22. L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (London, 1971), p. 359.

but rather with the necessity of acknowledging the Son if one is to be received by the Father. Referring to the murmuring of the Jews whom Jesus is addressing he paraphrases the verse thus:

By no means against me does the complaint of your murmuring tend but against the Father. For if you are the friends of the Father, you will not refuse to believe in me; for it cannot happen that anyone should be mine unless the Father receives him on account of the goodness of his will and draws him to me. Such I receive, indeed, and surround their debts with solicitude since they are committed to me by the Father and I bestow the great reward of resurrection on them.
(Vosté, p. 104).

Modern comment seems to agree substantially with the fathers in the interpretation of this verse. Bernard says: "The approach of the soul to God or Christ is not initiated by the man himself, but by a movement of divine grace."²³ Temple writes: "The 'drawing' of the Father is not a mechanical impulsion in which our wills play no part; the 'drawing' is effected by the influence of the word spoken on our hearts and minds ... but when we hear it lies with us (sustained by His grace) to learn or not to learn."²⁴

57. As the living Father sent
me and I live because of the Father,
so he who eats me will live because
of me.

Verse 57 was one which called for explanation that would refute Arian interpretation according to which it indicated the subordination of the Son. Ambrose does this by referring the saying to the human nature of Christ and not to his divine nature (*supra* pp. 180f). His long argument is somewhat lacking in clarity. Cyril says that in

23. J.H. Bernard, *ICC John*, p. 204.

24. W. Temple, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

becoming wholly man the Son retained the natural excellence of the Father (supra p. 257). He shows that the Arian interpretation contradicts other texts and leads to the conclusion that there is no difference between human and divine. The latter half of the verse he regards as speaking of the eucharist (supra pp. 261f). Gregory of Nazianzus also makes reference to this verse in arguing for the equality of the Father and the Son (supra p. 142). Hilary uses the first half of the verse in asserting identity of nature in the Father and the Son (supra p. 170). Theodore sees the words as a clear indication that not all that Jesus has been saying in the discourse can be attributed to his divine nature. Refuting those who regarded the first half of the verse as detracting from the divinity of the Son, he paraphrases it:

The Father, who lives forever, has given to me what is not of my (created) nature, eternal life, and through me to those who eat me.
(Vosté, p. 107)

He too, therefore, uses the two nature interpretation of the verse to safeguard the divinity of Christ. Augustine's explanation, though substantially of the same nature as the others', is more fully and clearly expressed:

He does not say, 'As I eat the Father and live by the Father, even he that eats me shall live by me.' For the Son, seeing he was begotten equal, is not bettered by participation of the Father, as we are bettered by participation of the Son through the unity of his body and blood, which the eating and drinking signifies ... His being sent was the emptying of himself and the taking upon him the form of a servant, which is rightly understood even while we maintain the equality of the Son with the Father. For the Father is greater than the Son as man but has the Son as God equal to himself ... It was as if he should say, 'That I should live by the Father, that is, should refer my life to him as greater, was brought about by my emptying of myself

in which he sent me, but that any should live by me is effected by the participation whereby he eats me. So then I being brought low live by the Father, man being lifted high, lives by me ... It is spoken without disparagement to his equality, yet he did not signify our equality and his to be the same, but intimated the grace of the mediator.

(Tract. in Joh. xxvi.19, CCCL 36, p. 269)

On the meaning of this verse the fathers appear to be agreed.

Among modern writers it has not been given as full treatment as among them. Barrett speaks of the Son having no independent life or authority apart from the Father and says: "The Christian life is a mediated life."²⁵

And again:

The discourse as a whole is summarised in 57. The Father sent the Son (as Son of man), and the Son lives not on his own account but by doing the Father's will (cf 4:34). Through his complete sacrifice of himself arises the possibility that men may feed upon him, that is, may enter into a relation with the Son analogous to the Son's relation with the Father; thus they will in turn have life.²⁶

Modern commentators are not so much concerned with whether the ideas are appropriate to the divine or human aspect of Jesus although Temple makes at least a reference to the divine qualities in his comment which has points of similarity with what the fathers have written:

Only the Father is source of his own life; even the divine Son, though co-eternal, is yet 'begotten', and lives because of the Father, of whom he is 'begotten before all worlds'. And we too, creatures who owe all to our Creator, have no life in ourselves; but if we make our own the living, dying and rising of the Son, we shall live because of him.²⁷

25. C.K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 248.

26. C.K. Barrett, "John" Peake's Commentary on the Bible, edd. M. Black & H.H. Rowley (London, 1962), p. 853.

27. W. Temple, op. cit., p. 96.

Vs 51c - 56 'The bread which I shall give for the life of the world in my flesh.' The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.'

The series of verses in which Christ speaks of the living bread as his flesh and declares that eating his flesh and drinking his blood is the means of communion with him and eternal life has been much quoted among the writers we have examined. It may be worthwhile to draw together the ideas they have expressed and see as a whole the significance the verses had for them.

In the writings of the earliest authors we found only allusive references which gave no clear indication of their understanding of the passage. In the Gnostic writings there is an instance of allegorizing the 'flesh and blood' as word and spirit (*supra* p. 43). Interpretation proper of the passage only begins with Clement of Alexandria whose most characteristic use of it is in connection with the appropriation of knowledge and instruction (*supra* p. 51f). Although he also uses it in a context which has eucharistic associations (*supra* p. 53), his tendency is to regard the eating and drinking as a metaphor for the growth of the believer in the comprehension of spiritual things — a progress in gnosis. He never uses it in a strictly sacramental sense.

Origen's exegesis is a continuation and elaboration of this tendency to allegorize the passage. For him to eat is to know; the

bread and wine are distinguished as ethical studies and mystical speculations; living bread is contrasted with dead bread as a metaphor for good and bad opinions entertained by the soul (supra pp. 64, 67). He even uses an allegorical interpretation to commend the practice of allegorizing (supra p. 62f).²⁸ He recognizes the eucharistic symbolism in the words but, as that seemed to him the more literal interpretation and since he looked upon the sacraments in any case rather as an accommodation to Christians of lesser capacity (supra pp. 72f), his preference is always to allegorize the words. He has a tendency to intellectualize whatever subject he is dealing with, e.g., the petition for bread in the Lord's Prayer.

Wiles remarks: "The Eucharistic interpretation of this passage is so familiar to us that it comes as something of a surprise to find that it takes a comparatively subordinate place in the earliest exegesis, especially from Alexandria."²⁹

In Athanasius we found passages reminiscent of Origen. Virtues and vices are said to be the food of the soul under the figures of Christ and the devil or living bread and bread of deceit (supra pp. 67, & 120f). Christ's words are food not only for those on earth but also for the saints in heaven (supra pp. 65 & 122). Each of them speaks of the life of a Christian as a continual feast (supra p. 122f).

We can see, therefore, a tradition of interpretation in Alexandria which placed its emphasis on an allegorical understanding of the passage as representing the appropriation of knowledge and instruction. Of

28. Cf Gregory of Nyssa, supra p. 144f.

29. M.F. Wiles, The Spiritual Gospel, p. 52.

later writers the one who appears to come closest to that view of the verses is Augustine. He too uses the concept of living bread when speaking of hearing the word of instruction (*supra* p. 204f). Although his exegesis for the petition for bread in the Lord's Prayer is more comprehensive than Origen's, his preference is for the interpretation most like that of Origen (*supra* pp. 66 & 219). His understanding of the Johannine passage, however, is not so one-sided as Origen's, for he has given ample recognition to a eucharistic reading of it. Nevertheless, his dictum, 'Believe and you have eaten', though spoken in exposition of verses 27-29 rather than of those in which the bread is said to be the flesh of Christ, well expresses his basic attitude to the interpretation of the passage (*supra* p. 203f). Although his emphasis is on faith rather than on knowledge, there is great similarity in their approach to the ideas of the passage.

We have also drawn attention to an epistle of the late fourth century which has striking affinities with Origen's way of interpreting the eating and drinking (*supra* p. 141).

Two writers, Origen and Chrysostom, make the definite statement that eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ can be interpreted in two ways, as partaking of the sacrament and as receiving instruction (*supra* pp. 68 & 155). While it is unlikely that any of the fathers would have felt himself restricted to a single interpretation of the concept, there are a few whose writings appear to contain only a eucharistic application. Cyprian's only use of the verses is in his eucharistic exegesis of the petition for bread in the Lord's Prayer and in testimonies that have reference to the sacraments (*supra* pp. 92

& 96). Cyril of Jerusalem quotes from the verses only in his addresses to the newly baptized on the meaning of the eucharist (supra p. 132). By far the majority of the writers, however, interpret the words sometimes in a eucharistic sense, sometimes with other significance or in association with other ideas.

When referring to the sacrament, the earlier fathers simply quote the passage, or part of it, adding no interpretative comment (Origen, p. 68; Tertullian, p. 79). From the middle of the fourth century onwards much fuller comment appears when the eucharistic association is involved.

The passage is called upon when it is desired to affirm the importance and necessity of the sacrament. Thus, although appended to a baptismal testimony, in Ad Quirinum III.25 Cyprian clearly intends to assert the importance of both sacraments (supra p. 96). Ephrem's discussion of the salvation of the thief on the cross, who presents him with a problem for which he must find a special solution, shows that he takes the passage as indicating the rule for all ordinary believers (supra pp. 113 & 115). Basil makes his position explicit in the Moralia, that participation is necessary for eternal life and thinks frequent communion makes for the abundant life (supra p. 139). In comment upon verses 53-55 Chrysostom says that Christ is teaching the necessity of celebrating the sacrament (supra p. 157). For Gregory of Nyssa the sacraments confirm our salvation (supra p. 146). Augustine believes the conditions here stated upon which eternal life is attained are binding even upon infants (supra p. 213).

It is in association with a quotation of verse 53 that both

Ambrose and Cyril of Jerusalem in their lectures on the sacraments tell their hearers that they must not be misled by the outward appearance (Cyril mentions even the taste) into thinking what they eat is merely bread and wine, but rather believe the words of Jesus when he declares it is his flesh and blood (*supra* pp. 132 & 183f). In Theodore's lectures on the same topic he presents a similar teaching, although it is not at the point where he quotes from John vi.³⁰ Chrysostom gives the like instruction when preaching on the words of Jesus at the Last Supper as contained in Matthew (*supra* p. 159).³¹ When commenting on verse 63 his definition of understanding carnally seems to be relying on the evidence of sense perception without the aid of the inward spiritual discernment. Theodore's lectures on the mysteries are much more restrained in their manner of speaking of the elements than are those of Cyril and Ambrose. Although he teaches, as they do, that the Holy Spirit effects a change in the elements, he has much more to say of their symbolic character than they (*supra* pp. 230-233). It must be remembered, of course, that symbol is not used in the modern sense but as something which "really is what it signifies" but "without being identical with" the visible form.³² Chrysostom's language in preaching on the eucharist is at the other extreme, being presented with great pictorial realism (*supra* p. 156f). If the development of this practice

30. He writes: "When the priest gives it he says, 'The body of Christ.' He teaches you by this word not to look at that which is visible, but to picture in your mind the nature of this oblation, which, by the coming of the Holy Spirit, is the body of Christ" (*Lib. ad Bapt.*, *WS VI*, p. 113).

31. Cf Cyril of Alexandria, *supra* p. 261f.

32. Vide Harnack's definition, *supra* p. 89.

of using such expressions derived from any scriptural basis, it is most probably from the Johannine discourse. The other authors we have studied make some use of realistic phrases too, but none approaches Chrysostom in vividness or frequency (e.g., Ephrem, p. 115, Augustine, p. 222 fn 34).

The manner in which the indwelling of Christ in believers is conceived and described acquires a similar realism from this vivid way of speaking about the eating and drinking. Along with the idea of the Spirit of God indwelling them, we find their union with Christ portrayed in physical terms as though dependent on the actual eating. Cyril of Jerusalem speaks of believers as being made of the same body and blood with Christ and says: "We come to bear Christ in us because his body and blood are distributed through our members" (supra p. 132). Chrysostom asserts that the union is not by love only but that "he has mixed himself up with us, kneaded up his body with ours" (supra p. 156). Hilary also denies that the union is one of obedience and devout will only, maintaining that Christ dwells in our carnal selves through the flesh. We are corporeally united to him by the sacrament (supra p. 172). Cyril of Alexandria describes the mutual indwelling as the bringing together of two pieces of wax so that they become one. Like yeast the eucharistic bread permeates our bodies so that Christ is in us and we are in him (supra p. 263).

Such expressions contrast sharply with Origen's concept of the eating and drinking. He places all his emphasis on the spiritual aspect of the eating so that he can say of the actual bread itself that one is not deprived of anything good through not eating it, nor benefited by

eating (supra p. 70). While Augustine says the bread and wine are the body and blood, it is a simple assertion (supra p. 210) which he does not elaborate in the realist manner of other writers of his age. It is the spiritual aspect of the sacrament which engrosses his attention and which he wishes to instil into his hearers. Though it must be visibly celebrated it must be spiritually understood (supra p. 209). Without spiritualizing the rite to the degree that we find in Origen, he nevertheless seems to depreciate the more physical aspect of it. The Christian who benefits is he who eats inwardly, "he who eats in the heart, not he who presses with his teeth" (supra p. 206), and again "His grace is not consumed in bites" (Tract. in Joh. xxvii.3, CCSL 36, p. 271).

While it is improbable that the materialistic attitude towards the eucharist which seems to appear in so many of the fathers' writings owes its origin solely to this Johannine passage, it may be that once it had become established it gained strength from the wording of John vi and in turn the exegesis of the passage was affected by the commonly held materialistic view of the sacrament.

We have also noted an instance of the use of these verses as evidence for the incarnation itself in the work of Hilary (supra p. 168). This is not an interpretation which appears generally in the exegesis of the fathers but seems to be an insight peculiar to Hilary. It is one, however, which appeals to some present day commentators as one of the intentions of the Fourth Evangelist in his use of the terms

'flesh' and 'blood'.³³

63. It is the spirit that gives life,
the flesh is of no avail; the
words that I have spoken to you
are spirit and life.

Verse 63 has seemed to most exegetes, both ancient and modern, to express the principle that ought to govern their understanding of the whole discourse. It would appear to be admirably suited to support the Gnostic denigration of the flesh and the allusion to it we have noted in the Apocryphal Letter of James is of that nature (*supra* p. 39). Tertullian, however, uses it with the purpose of affirming a bodily resurrection against Gnostic teaching that the soul only would be raised (*supra* p. 82). The spirit, he asserts, will give life to the flesh.

Another way of understanding the verse was to see in it an affirmation of the union of spirit and flesh in Christ's incarnation. Athanasius so interprets it (*supra* p. 123f), placing the emphasis on the spiritual side for the danger he fears is that too great an importance will be placed on the carnal. Cyril of Alexandria expresses much the same idea (*supra* p. 264). The indwelling of the Word makes Christ's flesh life-giving. For Theodore the verse is intended to indicate how the flesh of Christ becomes immortal and capable of conferring

33. J.H. Bernard, ICC John, p. clxviii, "Perhaps the emphasis laid here upon the 'flesh' and 'blood' of Christ is in polemical reference to the Docetism which Jn. always had in view"; R.H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 195, "The idea of eating His flesh and drinking His blood ... is in line with the insistence ... on the doctrine of the true humanity of Jesus"; W.E. Hull, *op. cit.*, p. 277, "Jesus was insisting that the life-giving sustenance which he offered men was conveyed ... by his incarnate existence"; R.E. Brown, The Gospel According to John (i-xii), p. 291, "The term [flesh] has a certain crudeness and reality; and this connotation, plus the fact that it recalls the Incarnation, may have been employed by the evangelist with anti-docetic intention."

immortality (*supra* p. 231). Augustine shows that not only the flesh of Christ, united with the Word, becomes the vehicle of man's salvation, but that the flesh (by which he now means frail human creatures) becomes the means whereby, under the influence of the Spirit, God's work of drawing men to himself is accomplished (*supra* p. 208).

Chrysostom, on the other hand, asserts that Christ is not speaking here of his own flesh but of those who hear and understand his words in a carnal manner (*supra* p. 160). It is to the latter half of the verse, however, that the fathers ordinarily refer when asserting the spiritual character of all that Christ has been saying. Several feel it necessary to point out, as something that requires clarification, that 'spirit and life' are synonymous with 'spiritual, of a spiritual character, and life-giving' (Cyril of Jerusalem, p. 130; Chrysostom, p. 160; Cyril of Alexandria, p. 264), or mean that Christ's words are to be spiritually understood (Athanasius, p. 124; Theodore, Vosté, p. 109; Augustine, p. 208). Just what they mean by spiritual understanding or carnal understanding is not always clearly expressed. Cyril of Jerusalem says that the Jews did not hear what Jesus said in a spiritual sense (*supra* p. 132) supposing that he was inviting them to eat flesh. Augustine says the Jews understood it in the sense of meat cut up ready for sale (*supra* p. 208). That, therefore, would be a case of carnal understanding. But what was presented to the communicants in the eucharist was clearly not flesh in that sense. Ambrose's auditors are represented as remonstrating that what they see is not flesh and blood (*supra* p. 184). Chrysostom gives the most direct definition of what he means by carnal understanding. "It is looking merely to what is

before our eyes without imagining anything beyond" (supra p. 160). A little earlier he had said that it was carnal to think Jesus was the son of Joseph and to question his descent from heaven. For Chrysostom, therefore, carnal understanding seems to be taking things for what they appear to be, and not recognizing the hidden spiritual significance that lies behind them. Understanding spiritually, then, would be the recognition of those concealed meanings. That definition is compatible with different ways of conceiving what is concealed, with different conceptions of the indwelling of Christ. The language of Chrysostom suggests that he thought of it not only in a spiritual sense but in to some degree a physical sense as well (supra p. 156), whereas Augustine's way of expressing it almost repudiates any physical material interpretation:

What the Lord has given us to understand in the eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood is that we should dwell in him and he in us. Now we dwell in him when we are his members and he dwells in us when we are his temple. But that we should be his members, unity joins us together. That unity may join us together, what except love effects? And the love of God, whence is it? Ask the apostle. The love of God, he says, is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given us. Therefore, it is the Spirit that gives life for the Spirit makes living members.

(Tract. in Joh. xxvii.6, CCL 36, p. 272)

Cyril of Alexandria says that the indwelling of Christ is to be understood in both senses (supra p. 261f). As pointed out above, Hilary had held our union with Christ to be not one of obedience and will alone, but also, by means of the sacrament, one of the flesh as well (supra p. 172).

Verse 63 was also quoted by Basil as a supporting text for the teaching that the Holy Spirit was not a creature but divine in the same sense as Father and Son (supra p. 138). The latter half of the verse

was used by Ambrose, rather strangely, as asserting that the Holy Spirit is Life (*supra* p. 182), whereas Cyril of Jerusalem had said that 63b referred not to the Holy Spirit but to spiritual teaching (*supra* p. 130). Gregory of Nyssa uses the verse in commending allegorical interpretation (*supra* p. 144f).

Modern commentators also see this verse as interpretative of the discourse as a whole. Dodd remarks that "this is the clue that the reader must hold fast in attempting to understand the discourse."³⁴ Barrett says: "The discourse of this chapter is incomprehensible except from this standpoint; otherwise the words of Jesus could have led only to a crude cannibalism."³⁵ They are not agreed as to just what are the words of Jesus to which the latter part of the verse refers. Temple says: "The reference is not to this discourse as a whole; still less is it to the Lord's teaching as a whole. 'The words that I have spoken to you' are the words 'Flesh' and 'Blood'."³⁶ Bernard and Dodd state that it is the preceding discourse that is meant.³⁷ Barrett believes that *ῥήματα* need not refer exclusively to the words of the preceding discourse; all the words of the incarnate Christ may be meant."³⁸ Hoskyns thinks that in the first instance the discourse is intended but beyond that also the whole teaching of Jesus.³⁹ The fathers, too, are

34. C.H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

35. C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 251. Yet R. Bultmann says, "The statement of this verse is not an alleviation that helps to remove the offence, as if it invited to a spiritualizing interpretation, but the statement is a call to a decision" (*op. cit.*, p. 446).

36. W. Temple, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

37. J.H. Bernard, *ICC John*, p. 218; C.H. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

38. C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, p. 251.

39. E.C. Hoskyns, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

not agreed on the question. Athanasius' remark (*supra* p. 124) may be thought to be most nearly like that of Temple. Cyril of Jerusalem seems to restrict it to the immediate context (*supra* p. 130). Gregory of Nyssa, using it out of context, makes the phrase refer to all Jesus' teaching (*supra* p. 145). Augustine seems to understand the words more particularly of the discourse with special application to the sayings about flesh and blood (*supra* p. 209). Theodore also seems to regard the 'words' as the words of the preceding discourse (Vosté, p. 109). This view is quite explicit in Cyril of Alexandria:

For the whole of my exposition to you was of the divine Spirit and of eternal life ... the words then in which I have conversed with you are spirit, that is, spiritual and of the Spirit and are life, that is, life-giving and of that which is by nature life.

(P. 1, p. 553)

R.E. Brown thinks that verse 60 immediately followed verse 50 in the "original" discourse, the intervening passage being inserted from the Johannine tradition of the Last Supper.⁴⁰ Thus, "'flesh' in 63 has nothing to do with the Eucharist" and consequently the emphasis on spirit does not refer to a "spiritual interpretation of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist."⁴¹ However, since he has already affirmed that in the earlier portion of the discourse "there is a secondary eucharistic reference"⁴², it would seem reasonable that flesh and spirit would also have such a secondary reference here.

Barrett speaks of the meaning of verse 63 in much the same way

40. R.E. Brown, The Gospel According to John (i-xii), p. 286.

41. Ibid., p. 300.

42. Ibid., p. 274.

as the fathers: "The flesh of Jesus is the vehicle of the Spirit and therefore gives life".⁴³ Vawter says: "The life of which he has been speaking is entirely within the sphere of the Spirit, and only the Spirit can give an understanding of it."⁴⁴ MacGregor also echoes the fathers when he says the words of Christ "are to be accepted in a spiritual sense."⁴⁵ However, he sees the passage as posing a problem for the exegete. How is verse 63 to be reconciled with verses 53-56? He says: "We have here side by side two inconsistent lines of thought which John tries, not with complete success, to harmonize."⁴⁶ The fathers do not appear to be conscious of such a problem. For them the problem was rather in the earlier verses by themselves and verse 63 supplied the solution. Hoskyns' way of expressing himself is very close to the way in which they spoke: "In itself flesh is flesh and it profiteth nothing for life and salvation, but if penetrated by the Spirit of God, it becomes vivified and vivifying."⁴⁷

43. C.K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 251.

44. B. Vawter, op. cit., p. 438.

45. G.H.C. MacGregor, The Gospel of John (London, 1928), p. 161.

46. Ibid., p. 161.

47. E.C. Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 338; cf also W.H. Rigg's paraphrase: "Flesh by itself, mortal flesh, is entirely uncreative, but the flesh of the ascended Lord, seeing that it has been quickened by the Spirit, has thereby been freed from its earthly limitations, and thus his manhood will ever be at the disposal of his people for their spiritual life and stay. The words of instruction which have been given, as indeed is the case with all Christ's words, are not to be taken in an earthly and carnal sense. Christ's hearers must penetrate to their inner meaning, for they can only be understood in a spiritual and heavenly manner" The Fourth Gospel and Its Message for Today (London, 1952), p. 235f.

In explanation of the inconsistency he sees for the modern reader MacGregor says,

The material elements for John do really represent the flesh and blood of Christ, who is present in them not merely by way of symbol but actually. In mitigation of John's apparent inconsistency it may be said that the two points of view would not be so clearly distinguishable to the Evangelist as to ourselves; the thought of the day would recognize no such complete antagonism as do we between matter and spirit. 48

It is the distinction between ancient and modern ways of understanding a 'symbol' that is involved. The fathers still understood the concept in the way MacGregor has suggested that the evangelist understood it. It is perhaps due to this difference of understanding where the idea of a symbol is concerned that so much of what the fathers say about the eating and drinking appears so grossly materialistic to us.

Hoskyns considers patristic exegesis of the discourse is "often far more satisfactory than the explanatory notes of modern commentators, because they do not refer it exclusively either to teaching or to sacrament."⁴⁹ They place their emphasis now upon one aspect, now upon another, of the symbolism. Those who wish to regard the passage as referring solely to one or the other are thus opposed to the earliest exponents of its meaning. Even those whose emphasis was as divergent as Origen's or Augustine's was from such as Chrysostom recognize this double reference. When emphasis is placed on one rather than the other, it may reflect the author's view of the importance of the sacrament in the Christian life. That at least would seem to be an inference that might be drawn from Origen's remarks.

48. G.H.C. MacGregor, op. cit., p. 162.

49. E.C. Hoskyns, op. cit., p. 346.

X. CONCLUDING REMARKS

An examination of the early exegesis of John vi and the ways in which some of the statements of the chapter were used by the fathers has shown how the disputes and controversies of the period affected the understanding and interpretation of the passage. The issues that were agitating the Church at the time of writing are reflected in the work of most of the early fathers. The chapter supplied texts that could be used against Sabellian, Arian, Donatist and other heresies. When in the course of time a question at issue had ceased to be uppermost and had been replaced by another, the same passage might be employed in a totally different way. Verse 38, at one period used by Tertullian (*supra* p. 79) and Novatian (*supra* p. 106) to show that the persons in the Godhead were distinct and different, was at a later time used by Hilary (*supra* p. 165) and others to maintain their similarity and identity of nature.

The differences between the Alexandrian and Antiochene approaches to Scripture have been discernible in the comment upon the passage. The early part of the chapter has illustrated the love of the fathers, especially the Alexandrians, for allegory and we have seen to what lengths it could extend. Some instances have been noted where a tradition in allegorical interpretation may be seen. The more restrained and literal attitude of Antiochene exegesis, appearing less foreign to present day methods, has been seen to show a greater interest in the psychological factors that motivated the words and actions of Jesus, his disciples and the multitude.

In the interpretation of the discourse differences of emphasis seem to reflect a difference of attitude to the eucharist. This is particularly to be noticed in Origen whose preference for a metaphorical interpretation related to the appropriation of knowledge is accompanied by the view that sacraments are an accommodation to those of lesser capacity. The discourse was regarded by most, however, as specifically eucharistic teaching given by Jesus. Thus it has been seen to have an influence on eucharistic doctrine, e.g., as supplying the authority for the necessity of participation for salvation. The physical realism of its language may have encouraged an even greater realism in the fathers' manner of speaking about the eucharistic elements and the believer's union with Christ. At the same time it has been seen that this development, most vividly seen in the writings of Chrysostom in the late fourth century, was resisted by such authors as Theodore and Augustine.

Interpretation of the chapter by the fathers shows great variety. Though much of it had relevance chiefly for their own times and the issues at stake in that era, reference to the writings of some modern commentators has shown that many of their insights are still valid and appear in a present day understanding of the passage. The fathers did not subject the Scripture to the kind of criticism used today to determine the meaning a passage had for its scriptural author. However, they lived in a world of ideas and thought forms more nearly akin to those of the author of the Fourth Gospel than we do today. For this reason alone a study of their exegesis may be valuable for an understanding of the meaning of John. Their exegesis may suggest, for instance, that the discourse ought not to be too narrowly restricted to a single interpretation. It may be that those who insist that the fourth

evangelist intended the passage to refer only to the teaching of Jesus and not in any sense to the eucharist and those who see it as intended solely as sacramental teaching are equally mistaken. The author of the Gospel may well have designed the passage to be interpreted in both senses. By restricting it to one only we may be denying the depth and richness of his thought. By recognizing both the early Church may have displayed a more accurate understanding of it. Such a conclusion does not, of course, ignore the fact that some of the fathers also erred in not holding the two in proper balance but at times gave more emphasis to one interpretation, in most cases the eucharistic, than it deserved.

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